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Muslim Communities in Gujarat

PRELIMINARY STUDIES IN THEIR
HISTORY AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

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M.A., Ph.D.



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*For
Jyoti, Priti
Radha, Mira
and
Ranjan*



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Baroda-2,
30-10-1963.

FOREWORD

Dr. Misra deserves to be congratulated for a very painstaking and scholarly piece of research work which he has done on the various Muslim communities which are now found in Gujarat. Dr. Misra's study is not purely historical. It is partly historical and partly sociological.

Long before the Muslim conquest of India, the Arabs had come in close contact with Gujarat because of its geographical position.

Saurashtra and Gujarat being situated on the west coast of India had very early trade and maritime connections with the Arabs. It is believed by some historians that the sudden overthrow of the great Vallabhi power in Gujarat was due to a probable Arab invasion. Even before the conquest of Gujarat by Ala-u-din Khilji, there was already a small Muslim community in Cambay. After the conquest of Gujarat by the Muslims and the subsequent emergence of the Sultanate of Gujarat, a large number of Muslim communities sprang up in Gujarat, some originally of foreign origin and some of indigenous growth.

Dr. Misra has referred to most of these Muslim communities in Gujarat. The Bohra, the Khojah and Memon communities are unique in Gujarat. They are enterprising business men and traders. Dr. Misra has dealt at length with customs, manners, social life and legal institutions of these communities.

It is surprising how Hindu religion has influenced other religions which came to India. The Muslim and the Christian communities in India were influenced by the Hindu caste system and social organization. Customs, manners and outlook on life of these communities have been deeply influenced by Hindu caste organization, manners and customs. Many of the Muslim communities were the result of conversion. They, therefore, embraced the Muslim religion but retained most of the customs and manners of the Hindu castes to which they formerly belonged.

This study shows the toleration of the early Hindu rulers in Gujarat. The early Arabs who came to Gujarat were allowed to set up their mosques and pursue their religion without any molestation.

In one instance, in Cambay, when there was a complaint that the Muslim mosque was damaged by the Hindus, Siddharaj Jayasingha who was then the Ruler of Gujarat personally investigated into this matter. On finding that the complaint was correct, he got the mosque rebuilt at his own expense and gave compensation to the Muslims whose property was destroyed.

Dr. Misra has produced a really first class solid historical study of Muslim communities in Gujarat for which he deserves our felicitations.

J. M. MEHTA,

M.A. (OXON.), PH.D. (LONDON), BAR-AT-LAW
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Baroda-2,
30-10-1963.

P R E F A C E

Our time craves a philosophy of history, a theory of culture. Generalization is its favourite tool to put a semblance of order into the overwhelming chaos of facts. Inevitably, it must face the danger of restating its insights on the strength of selected data that gently turn into cliches. And the more remote an area from our society as a whole the more deadening this reliance on yesterday's finds will become.

Strangely enough, research itself tends to slide into well-worn grooves. For decades on end, Islamic studies have largely side-stepped Indian Islam; and for generations, scholars have been hesitant to survey and analyse the social structure of the communities whose faith and history were their chosen theme.

Dr. Misra's studies on the Muslim castes of Gujarat and the history of the major sects which give Islam in that region its peculiar profile are welcome as a determined step towards neutralizing those three allied weaknesses. His book offers a wealth of new data; it opens the door to one of the least investigated sectors of the Islamic world; and it provides a rich introduction to composition and stratification of Gujarati Islam and the social realities within which the Muslim faith is lived in the complexities of an area where traditions are commingled rather than blended.

No doubt, the reader will want more than Dr. Misra has been able to give. The correlation of sect, caste, linguistic affiliation—to mention but one series of co-ordinates that emerge from his materials—will require further investigation as will the attraction which certain doctrines held and hold for certain units, ethnic, linguistic or professional. But a beginning has been made, and this beginning has already yielded a good many results that will stand the test of further scrutiny.

The studies which Dr. Misra inaugurated and which, it must be hoped, he himself will be able to widen indicate—and this is where their promise goes beyond their actual content—that in India sociological research would seem to be free from that strange distrust of social science studies which, unfortunately, is found only too often in countries, and especially in newly independent countries, outside the Western orbit. This distrust, nursed by a blend of bad conscience, suspicion and an unwillingness to view oneself in a full-length mirror, reflects at the same time the embarrassment of the very young and the precarious self-satisfaction of the very old. Though old and young, impetuous and reflective, Indian scholarship, of which Dr. Misra's work may be taken as a representative sample, appears to have been able to fight clear of the inhibitions of false shame, with the result that by viewing itself from all sides it has enriched not only that self-knowledge without which planning for the future turns futile but the possibilities of scholars and thinkers anywhere on the globe.

*Near Eastern Center
University of California, Los Angeles.*

G. E. VON GRUNEBÄUM
Director

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A little over four years ago, in July 1959, we started to work on a project, "Socio-Historical Survey of the Muslim Population of Gujarat". On this we worked till March 1961 and the present monograph is its result.

This work we began with certain questions in mind and with certain assumptions; these have been given later. But soon, our limitations became apparent to us. Our planning as regards the scope and objectives of our work, had been, we discovered more on the hopeful and ambitious side than on the realistic. We had little experience of field-work.

It also became clear to us that in this context and placed as we were, it would be necessary for us to devise our own methods and techniques of work. This in itself, was not free from hazards. And by the time, we had surmounted a few of these difficulties and evolved some order, we ran into serious staff difficulties. With this, our capacity to do intensive work, especially detailed field-work, became seriously inhibited.

It is with a certain sense of dissatisfaction, almost of inadequacy, therefore that this study is being presented. No finality is claimed for the facts and views presented in this, what is primarily a preliminary and exploratory endeavour. More intensive work, both historical and sociological would certainly bring to light many facts which would correct and balance this study. If this study is therefore able to attract the attention of the serious students to this inter-disciplinary field which promises rich rewards, its purpose would have been to some extent, fulfilled.

I may also be permitted to add here that nothing can be farther from our intentions than to affect the susceptibilities of any community or any group or any person. It has been our object to maintain objectivity and a desire to understand underlies the attempt which we have made. It is in this spirit therefore that I would earnestly request the following pages to be read. Criticism which would be of help in correction and further prosecution of our work would be very welcome indeed.

It is to a pleasant duty that I turn with these remarks, to a privilege which I have looked forward to, of expressing my sincere thanks to the help and encouragement which has been received from different quarters before and during the course of this work. This study would not have been possible without the funds provided by the University Grants Commission, first the Government of Bombay and later the Government of Gujarat and the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. To all these authorities, our first thanks are due for making this work possible.

I am deeply thankful to Dr. Jyotindra M. Mehta, M.A. (Oxon.), Ph.D. (London), Bar-at-Law, Vice-Chancellor, The M. S. University of Baroda for the keen interest he has taken in this work. He went through the typescript

and his *Foreword* does more than justice, to this a preliminary study. Of this I am conscious and deeply appreciative.

But for the unfailing encouragement and advice given by Dr. C. S. Patel, M.Sc. (Bom.), Ph.D. (Leeds), Pro-Vice-Chancellor, The M. S. University of Baroda, this study would not have seen the light of the day. For this, I am deeply grateful to him. To Shri B. K. Zutshi, M.A., LL.B., Registrar, The M. S. University of Baroda, I am thankful for smoothening out the administrative difficulties whenever they occurred.

To my colleague and friend, Dr. I. P. Desai, M.A., Ph.D. (Bom.), Professor and Head of the Department of Sociology, The M. S. University of Baroda, my debt is indeed great. The scheme of work was planned with his help and his advice and assistance was freely available during its implementation. He went through the draft of the typescript and his suggestions were invariably judicious and invaluable. To Dr. David F. Pocock, M.A. (Cantab.), D.Phil. (Oxon.), Lecturer in Indian Sociology, Institute of Social Anthropology, Oxford University, I am grateful for going through portions of this work and making a number of valuable suggestions. To Dr. Colin C. Davies, formerly Reader in Indian History, Oxford University who has since then retired, I am grateful for having looked over a part of this work though his primary interest was in another work, a historical one, which I did in Oxford, with him as my Supervisor of Studies. And to the British Council which awarded me a Scholarship enabling me to stay in Oxford from October 1961 to August 1962, I must express my sincere thanks for the opportunity so provided.

During the course of this work, the Research Assistants and I had the opportunity to visit different parts of Gujarat and to meet many people. It is with deep pleasure therefore that I take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation and thankfulness for the friendliness and hospitality with which we were met everywhere. Without this help and generosity, this work would not have been possible—though I must hasten to add that our kind friends are in no way responsible for anything said in this book. Indeed, some of them may be rather disappointed in this work, in the use I have made of the information made freely available to us. For this I have to request for their indulgence; I am sure that they understand my sincerity though they may regret my inability to do justice to the task.

In singling out a very few of them for special thanks, I am conscious of many others, a number of whom will not read and may not hear of this work. And first, I must mention, the two men from whom I have learnt a great deal and who epitomise in themselves the culture and the learning characteristic of traditional Gujarat scholars. They are Maulana Muhammad Shakir, a man having both charm and distinction and head of the Sulaimani community in India and Pakistan with his headquarters in Baroda and to whom thus, I was able frequently to resort. The next is Kazi Syed Nuruddin Husain of Bharuch to whom I have frequently gone not only to meet a man of ripe knowledge and unfailing courtesy but also to utilise his large collection of books and manu-

scripts. From his grateful to him for deserve to be prese

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My thanks are d portunity of discuss information on the M.L.A. and Shri N Maulana Habibur Piranewale of Alm of Surat: Bawasat Kacchh: Shri Ibra sari: Shri Pirbhai mention, Shri Aze and Maulana Mu am thankful for

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Department of The M. S. Uni Baroda.

7th November

scripts. From his family records come the registers cited herein and I am grateful to him for allowing me to use it for this work. Libraries like his deserve to be preserved with institutional help.

I am thankful to Dr. Y. Najmuddin, the learned Amir-u'l-Jamia, Jamia-i-Saifiya, Surat for giving me the opportunity to meet him in Bombay and discussing some aspects of this work. To Maulwi Mohsinbhai who made this interview possible, I have to thank for this and other help.

My thanks are due to a number of friends with whom I have had the opportunity of discussing some of the problems raised in this book and seeking information on them. Among them, I may mention Shri Badruddin Blue, M.L.A. and Shri Momin Miyanji Nur Muhammad "Ruhkash" of Sidhpore: Maulana Habibur Rahman Ghaznawi, Editor *Ab-i-Hayat* and Syed Kasim Ali Piranewale of Ahmedabad: Shri A. F. Syed "Munadi", Editor *Muslim Gujarat* of Surat: Bawasaheb Riyaz Husain of Palanpur: Shri Hashimbhai of Bhuj-Kacchh: Shri Ibrahim Dargahwala of Navasari and the Qazi Saheb of Navasari: Shri Pirbhai Tai of Dabhoi: and in Baroda, friends among whom I may mention, Shri Azeem Tyabji, Shri M. H. Dayamakumar, Shri M. A. Qureshi and Maulana Muhammad Siddiq. To Shri Ismail M. Patel of Bharuch, I am thankful for some material which has been used in this book.

To my colleagues, the Research Assistants who worked on this project, I am reluctant to express my thanks since it may seem to diminish their share in this, what in a very real sense is the result of team work. They did the field-work on which this book is based and next to our kind informants, it is they who are responsible for the merits, if any, in this study. Sarvashri A. A. Kazi and H. R. Gautama worked on this project from July 1959 to February 1961 and Sarvashri Mir Mahboob Ali, A. H. Tai and G. Z. Refai from July 1959 to March 1961. Shri G. Z. Refai, at present also a Research Assistant in the Department of History in a different scheme was of much help subsequently.

It has been necessary to put this work through the press with express speed and for this as well as for the excellent get up, and production of this book I am thankful to my publishers Messrs. Asia Publishing House and the printers, Shri Ramanbhai Patel of the University (Sadhana) Press, Baroda, both of whom met my numerous demands with exemplary patience.

I am deeply thankful to Professor Gustave E. von Grunbaum, Director, Near Eastern Center, University of California, for his very kind Preface. Since it was received when this had already been composed, I have to mention my debt to him at the end of these Acknowledgements. But though last, it is not the least of our many debts, and I may be permitted to repeat my thanks to him.

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The M. S. University of Baroda,
Baroda.

7th November 1963

S. C. MISRA

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INTRODUCTION

THE IDEA of this inquiry has its genesis in the present writer's study of Indian history, especially Indo-Muslim history. A number of studies have been made of the cultural aspect of Indo-Muslim contact through the ages but none has been made which inquired into the social aspect of this interaction, into the formation, development and nature of the Muslim communities in this country. What factors led to the formation of these communities, especially of communities which were converted from Hinduism? What were the changes which Islam wrought in the life and manners of these people? How far were the neo-converts Islamized? How far were the foreign Muslim communities, indigenized by the impact of Indian life? How and in what manner did Indian Islam shape itself not only in its ideational and cultural spheres but in the social and inter-personal spheres?

It was obvious that the techniques of historical study would not by themselves answer the questions. The problem had to be studied from documents in the historical, time sequence and also analysed by observation in the present one. For, before going back to study the history of the Muslim communities, it was necessary to be definite regarding the nature of these communities. To what extent did these intra-Muslim groups share the characteristics of the intra-Hindu divisions? Could these be called castes?

The first task was therefore to lay down the basic premises on which the inquiry could be based, to define the Muslim communities and to enumerate them. This was necessary in view of the special position of the formation of communities within the social order of Islam. Unlike Hinduism, where caste-system is an integral part of the social order, Islam is theoretically and in many aspects actually, an egalitarian socio-religious system which discourages the formation of internal groups. For this reason, it was necessary to establish the fact of the existence of socially autonomous and mutually differentiated groups and communities and examine their main characteristics and historical antecedents.

This is the main theme of this work, the preliminary phase of a task where much remains, before any conclusions can be reached.

The inquiry commenced with the data available in the Gazetteers, Census Reports, other Reports and allied literary material. For isolating Muslim communities as they exist now, it was necessary to go to the National Register of Citizens which is maintained in taluqa and municipal headquarters and in which the names, age and occupation of the residents of that town or taluqa, are listed. These records thus give the family unit according to households, surnames, educational and occupational affiliations and the community to which the persons belonged.

The compilation of data on the basis of these records was a laborious and

time consuming task which followed upon the work in the libraries. In some ways, it was also the most discouraging one. It cannot be said that these records were all or in most cases, the most up-to-date or very accurate ones nor were they conclusive insofar as the educational and occupational levels were concerned. They had been compiled in 1951, when we went to them and as is well-known, two completed and one continuing Five Year Plans have wrought significant changes in these patterns.

With these limitations nevertheless, these are the main records which give an idea of the communal configurations in any particular place. Moreover, since recent census records do not show the sub-communal differences within the Muslim community or for that matter within the Hindu community either, their value in determining the distribution of these communities, is considerable. Hence, they are indispensable for field-work in a particular place as well as independent source material for educational and occupational details. An analysis of the source material thus gathered has been presented in this report in appendices 'B', 'C' and in Chapter 4 as "Brief Notes of Communities".

As this work concluded, this data was checked and supplemented by field-work. The field-work was based upon a questionnaire which is given at the end. The investigators were asked to use this questionnaire as an aid to their case-work and to make their reports in a narrative form. Deliberately, it was not made available in a printed form which had to be filled for it was felt that greater flexibility could be possible if the investigators were allowed initiative in treating and reporting their work.

As this work proceeded, historical material was collected dealing with the historical aspect of the work, in the shape of manuscripts, documents, *jama'at* literature, pamphlets, etc. This search, it must be confessed, did not yield expected results, especially regarding the period before the eighteenth century. Canonical literature, in the form of hagiography and *mafluzat* (speeches and sayings of saints) as also biographies was occasionally encountered. In addition, modern researches in historical fields, mostly published, were also studied. This was relatively plentiful for the Isma'ili communities, dealing not so much with their history or social organization but with the ritual and doctrinal aspects of their religious life.

In the presentation of this material, this study has been divided into three parts. The first part deals in a broad survey with the history of Muslim communities in Gujarat. It is divided into three chapters. In the first, the foundation and the rise of Muslim communities in Gujarat are sketched upto the end of the fourteenth century by which time, they become too numerous and too differentiated to be treated together. The next two chapters deal with the history of first, the Bohra community and then the Khojah missionaries including the dissenting offshoots of this order in Gujarat.

The next Part is mainly ethnological giving an account of the Muslim communities in Gujarat, regarding whom information could be obtained. The first chapter in this Part contains brief notices which have been based

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upon an analysis of the population records, i.e. the National Register of Citizens. In the second chapter, details regarding thirty-three communities are given, which are based on field-work. These details are primarily concerned with the manners and customs, social volitions, dress and social organization. A number of reports are more detailed than others owing to two factors: in the first place, some communities are numerically much larger, requiring more detailed treatment; secondly, field-work was also uneven and it may be said that fuller field-work could not be done respecting a great number of communities.

This chapter as will be seen shows glaring lacunae. This is the result of our inability to do sufficient field-work in the communities not included. If this preliminary treatment suggests the immense possibility of research work in this sphere, the object will have been served. Thus, there is no field-work account of the two major Isma'ili communities of Gujarat, the Bohra and the Khojah whose history has been sketched earlier. We have not been able to deal even cursorily with the distinctive mercantile Sunni community, the Memons. The reason again, was that we did not feel that our field-work was sufficient to enable us to treat these communities in even the bare manner, others had been done.

Most of those included, as will be noted are Sunni and if it can be said, those which do not have the sophisticated social organization and canonical literature which is possessed by the Isma'ili communities mentioned earlier.

The third and the last Part deals with the social organization of the Muslim communities and their social institutions. The first chapter here attempts an analysis of the elements of the caste-system, found atypically among the Hindus, as it is reflected in the Muslim communities. *Inter alia*, there is an attempt to conceptualize this peculiar adaptation of the Great Tradition to the Little Tradition and to find out the hierarchical spacing and social mobility within this order.

The next chapter deals with the self-administering institutions which have been thrown up by the communities for maintaining their individuality and in recent years, for furthering their educational and occupational interests. The change from the punitive *jama'tbandi* of the former era to the welfare organization of the present one, while still based on birth-determined configurations, has been noted here.

The next, eighth chapter, deals with the societal relationships within the community itself, namely, marriage and family relationships. Here, a preliminary attempt has been made to discuss the endogamous and hypergamous pattern of marriage alliances and some of the family obligations which family organization imposes on its members. Included in this chapter is a section on the communal affiliations of the marriage patterns as revealed by an analysis of the marriage records maintained by the Qazi of Bharuch, culled from a random sample, the marriage register dealing with the years 1853-55. An appendix later, gives the kinship terminology current among the Sunni Muslim

communities.

The last chapter deals with the changes which have been coming over the Muslim communities in recent years, especially, the allied processes which are rather clumsily described as Islamization, Rationalization and Westernization. An attempt has been made to indicate the processes of social mobility and social rise and the changes that these bring in their train, especially as these processes are being manifest in the rapidly changing situation of the present days.

The appendices which follow, give first, the kinship terminology of the Muslim Communities. Then follows the list of Muslim Communities and revealed by population records, their number and strength. This is followed by a list of places where population records could be consulted and field-work done. Appendix 'D' gives a chronological list of Da'udi Bohra Dai's in India. Then is given the Questionnaire which was given to the investigators.

The limitations from which this inquiry suffered, are obvious. In the first place, field-work was inadequate. It was confined mainly to the towns of north and central Gujarat and to a lesser extent to south Gujarat. Perfunctory work could be done in Kacchh while Saurashtra remained virtually untouched. Rural areas were hardly penetrated.

Secondly, the materials on which the historical sections are based, particularly the two chapters dealing with the history of the Isma'ili communities, leave a historian dissatisfied. They are, as will be perceived, mainly secondary. But detailed treatment of a relatively not very well explored field, based on original material, was obviously beyond the compass of this, a preliminary study. Hence, it is only to give some idea of the growth of these communities in Gujarat and with the hope that they will form the stepping stones to further and detailed, individual studies, that these inadequate sketches have been attempted.

It is hoped to continue the work begun with this inquiry. With more detailed historical and sociological investigation it will be possible to have a clearer and better picture of the Muslim communities in Gujarat.

And finally, I would like to draw the attention of the reader to the "Additional Notes and Corrections" placed before the "Select Bibliography" for the incorporation of some changes of substance and for the removal of mis-prints.

CHAPTER 2

THE BOHRA COMMUNITY AND THEIR DA'IS IN GUJARAT

THE FOUNDATION of Isma'ili communities in Gujarat is an unique fact in Indian history. Nowhere else in India did these communities come into being in any sizable dimensions; nowhere else was the penetration of Islam as peaceful or the rise of the new communities so imperceptible. No other Muslim community in India suffered more at the hands of the iconoclastic Sunni rulers. And finally, none other have developed a business outlook which is distinct in Muslim communities. Their only compeer in this respect is the Gujarati community of the Memons.

It is not possible even to sketch in outline here, the fascinating story of the rise of Isma'ilism and its bifurcation into the two branches, the Eastern Isma'ilis or the Nizaris, represented in Gujarat by the Khojas and the Western or Musta'alis, to which the Bohra community belongs. Nevertheless, since the history of these communities would not be understood fully unless some of the basic features of its socio-religious organization together with the ideational framework which they subsume, are indicated, so an attempt is made to sketch very briefly the most fundamental of them. Particularly crucial in this matter are: in the first place, the position of the *Da'i-u'l-mutluq* in the Bohra community and the doctrine of *nas* by which succession is determined.

One of the distinctive features of the Isma'ili doctrines, is the highly developed theosophical framework which underlines its administrative system. This framework is patterned in a highly symbolic and mystic system of notations, grades and cycles. This is what is called the *batini* or the esoteric facet of the Isma'ili faith as distinct from the *zahiri* or the exoteric one. It is in this aspect which is treated as secret, to be revealed only to those who qualify for it and which is believed to unravel the true meaning of external ritualism and observance. The sophistication with which this inner and secret knowledge has been developed in Isma'ilism has made it often referred to as the *batini* faith.

This theosophy is reflected in the religious hierarchy which is implicit in the Isma'ili framework, known as the *hudud-al-din* which again is a part of the larger cosmogony. The highest position in this framework is accorded to the *Natiq* or the Prophet: he propounds the exoteric nature of the faith. He appoints an *Asas*, and he then unravels the *batini* or the esoteric significance. The *Asas* is also the *wasi* or the executor and successor of the *Natiq*. It was in this relation that 'Ali stood to the Prophet.

After the death of the *Asas*, his place is taken by the *Imam*. During his

lifetime, he appoints the *Hujjat* who succeeds him as *Imam*. This line lasts till the next *Natiq* when the cycle starts once over again.

The *Hujjats* are of two kinds. In the first, there is *Hujjat-u'l-A'zam* who is the son and the heir apparent of the *Imam*. In the second category are twelve *Niharis* and twelve *Laili Hujjats*; the *Niharis* are placed in the charge of the twelve *jaza'ir* or the continents of the earth and stay there while the *Laili* are always in attendance on the *Imam*. They are responsible for the *batini* aspect of the *da'wat* or mission and remain concealed.

Next in rank comes the *Da'i*, or the one who calls or summons people to the *da'wat* or mission. These are of three kinds: *da'i-u'l-balagh*, *da'i-u'l-mutluq* and *da'i-u'l-mahsur* or *mahdud*. The *da'i* is followed by *m'azun-i-mutluq* and *ma'zun-i-mahsur* or *mahdud*. The latter is also known as the *Mukasir*.¹

The *da'i's* status has been defined elaborately in the books belonging to the period of Zuhur i.e. Manifestation. A work of that age lists elaborate and stringent qualifications for a *da'i*.² Syedna Tahir Saif-u'd-din, the present *da'i* has defined him as one who "invited the people to the right path of God by modestly preaching the virtues and the philosophy of Islam".³ During this age, the *da'is* were the missionaries who spread the gospel of the *batiniyya* faith in different parts of the Muslim world.⁴

In the Age of Satr i.e. Concealment, when the *Imam* with the twenty-four *Hujjats* and the *da'i-u'l-balagh* went into concealment, the *Da'i-u'l-mutluq's* position has become the highest in the visible world. It was now moreover, a purely socio-religious status he had got for with the fall of the Fatimid dynasty, political power had been divested from the *da'wat*, leaving it a persecuted and harried community. The position of the *Da'i-u'l-mutluq* as the supreme functionary of this social order has to be seen in the perspective of this perennial menace which has haunted the Musta'ali community for most of the past eight hundred years.

As the official head of the community, the *Da'i-u'l-mutluq* claims the unquestioned obedience of his followers. The much discussed covenant or *misaq* which is administered to every adult Bohra on the occasion of *I'd-u'l-Ghadir Zil-hujja* 18 is a pledge in which he affirms his loyalty to the *Imam* and his vice-

¹ A great deal of material of Isma'ili philosophy and social administration is available; for the clearest exposition in English, refer, Ivanow, W., "The Organisation of Fatimid Propaganda," *JBBRAS* XXV. Hollister, J. N., *Shi'a in India*, 260-2 and 280-1. 'Abd-u'l-Husain, *Gulzar-i-Da'udi*, 67-8. The most detailed and authoritative analysis is however, in Urdu by Dr. Zahid 'Ali in *The Origins of Our Isma'ili Creed and Its System* (Academy of Islamic Studies, Hyderabad, 1954), Chapter II, 299-330. These references are specifically to the hierarchical organization, sketched here.

Some writers also mention a *Bab* or Gate as an official next to the *Imam*.

² 'Abd-u'l-Husain, op. cit. 136-215. This is a translation of the conditions as given by the 3rd *da'i* in his *Risala of Mujazat-u'l-Kafiya*, which is again a reproduction of a much earlier work.

³ In *Zu'i-Nur-u'l-Haq-u'l-mubin* cited by Abd-u'l-Husain, op. cit. 54.

⁴ Zahid 'Ali, op. cit. 317-9. E. G. Browne, *Literary History of Persia*, 411, Abd-u'l-Husain, op. cit. 54.

regents and swears to refrain from any act which would prejudice his interests. An absolute embargo, social and religious coupled with exemplary penalties is placed on him who violates this oath.⁵ This *misag* appears to have been current in the Fatimid age as it is reproduced in an early text but evidently, in an age of persecution, it gained correspondingly in significance.

It has also been claimed that by virtue of his position, the *Da'i* share some of the attributes of the *Imam* and he is *ka'l ma'sum* or "like-sinless".⁶ Though it was suggested in one of the pamphlets submitted in one of recent cases that "the Mullaji (is) a supreme being, inferior only to the deity who has created them all"⁷ it is very doubtful if orthodox opinion, would go so far as this. However, he is certainly regarded as an exceptionally gifted individual in contact with the *Imam* through his intermediaries; on crucial occasions, for instance, when nominating his successor, he acts in accordance with the inspiration he receives.⁸

The extent to which the *da'i* is empowered to control his followers in their social and religious life has been and continues to be a bitter controversy between the orthodox and the progressive sections of the community. The progressives would like to see a greater participation of the community in the ordering of the *da'wat* affairs; the Syedna has with equal firmness reaffirmed his responsibility to those above him and the inadmissibility of his rendering account to his followers or their elected or appointed leaders in matters that have been left to his individual judgement.

As for the obligation of the followers to obey the *da'i*, the remarks of the learned trial judge in the well-known Burhanpur Dargah Case are worth quoting: "The distinction between obedience to the *Imam* personally and that to a *Da'i-u'l-mutluq* duly constituted as discussed above, would show that the orders of the latter have to be obeyed only so far as they are in accordance with the holy *Koran* and also in accordance with canons of true reasoning. . . . It is worthy of note here that obedience could broadly be divided into two kinds, viz. (1) obedience in matters entirely religious, and (2) in matters partly religious and partly secular. Keeping this broad distinction in view and applying it to obedience due from Dawoodi Bohras to the present Mulla Saheb, I find that in matters entirely religious, his orders must be obeyed as far as they do not come in conflict with the holy *Koran* and the sayings of the Prophet and the *Imams*; that in matters of the second class, his orders must be obeyed so far as their religious side is in consonance with the authorities just stated above and so far as the secular side is concerned, his orders must be obeyed insofar as they

⁵ The text of this *misag* has been given in *Gulzar-i-Da'udi*, 125-38. Zahid 'Ali, op. cit. 326-9. The trial judge in the Burhanpur Dargah Case referred to the *Importance of the Misak and its Scope* in his Judgement. (Judgement in Civil Suit No. 32 of 1925 in the Court of the 1st Class Sub-judge, Burhanpur, published by Tayebali Mahomedali Bhamgarhwala, Burhanpur C. P., October 1931, pp. 50-53.)

⁶ Zahid 'Ali, op. cit. 252-4. Judgement, op. cit. 22 and 55-6.

⁷ BLR XXIV 1067: It was contended on the Mullaji's side that he was *ma'sum* or sinless. Idem 1066. Quoted in Hollister, op. cit. 280.

⁸ Zahid 'Ali, op. cit. 253.

stand the touch-stone of reason. Coming to the application of these principles to the issue, I would hold that the plaintiff would break the *Misak* if he disobeys the Mulla Saheb's orders which are in consonance with the above tests but they would not be breaking the *Misak* if the orders disobeyed do not stand the said tests."⁹

The *Ma'zun* is the deputy to the *Da'i* and as in the present case, is usually the heir apparent. The *Mukasir*, or executor is the next assistant, looking after important matters.

The *Da'i's* power over the followers is expressed through the *Amils*, his representatives in all important centres where there are Bohras. No religious or civil ceremony is valid without the *Amil's* express permission. He is the representative who receives the *misag* on behalf of the *Da'i* and hands out the *chithi* or letter, with which the pious Bohras are buried. Only those who have been authorized by him can lead the prayers; and he can deny use of Bohra mosques, mausolea and sanctuaries to those who have been excommunicated or have in any way incurred the *Da'i's* displeasure.

Finally, the *Shaikhs* constitute the *ulema* of the Bohra community. With the improvement of the Saif-e Madrasa in Surat, their number and quality has been generally better than before.

This in outline is the organization of the *Da'wat*. We may now pass to the next important matter, viz. the regulation of succession especially of the *Da'i*. Since most of the dissensions in the Isma'ili communities have arisen on the basis of succession disputes, it is necessary to understand the peculiar doctrine of *nas* which determines succession.

Under Shi'a law, it is illegal for the '*ummat* to select the *Imam*; the *Imam* must be unmistakably nominated and singled out by his predecessor. "It is a declaration", the trial judge observed in the Burhanpur Dargah Case, "made by the *Da'i-u'l-mutluq* nominating his successor to the office and its essential ingredient is that it should be so explicit as to leave no doubt as to the identity of his nominee. This is *Nase Jali* as distinguished from *Nase Khafi* in which the person nominated is not capable of identification."¹⁰

Though the principle outlined is applied above to the case of the *Da'i-u'l-mutluq*, but it is of general validity, especially in Shi'a theology. The meaning of the word *nas* in Arabic is that which is crystal clear and in the open: in the technical sense therefore in which it is used in this context, it implies the very clear nomination made by the *Imam* or similar office-holder, regarding his successor. Thus the Prophet on the occasion of the Ghadir-Khum raised the hands of 'Ali till the whites of the arm pit showed in the open assemblage of his followers and designated him as his successor.¹¹

It is not necessary to go into the complicated questions of succession which

⁹ Judgement, op. cit. 58 (italics as in original).

¹⁰ Idem 18.

¹¹ Zahid 'Ali, op. cit. 378-9.

have bedevilled Shi'a history in spite of this fundamental provision. The two cases which led to the Isma'ili and later the Nizari-Musta'ali split are indications of the schisms which can occur when partisan tempers run high and the nomination tends to be vague. In subsequent ages, in India, the splitting off of the Sulaimani, and 'Alia sects has been based on questions of these disputes.

In theory, the *Da'i-u'l-mutluq* is guided by the *Imam* when making this decision; it is therefore in the nature of an inspiration, one which it can be said to be made through but not wholly by the *Da'i*. The question arose in the Burhanpur Dargah Case. "The question arises", the Judge remarked, "why should the 46th *Da'i* postpone the matter though reminded of his great responsibility in the matter of *Nas* by the two brothers in the afternoon of 28th Jamad-i'l Akhar? The reason appears to me that the appointment proceeds on inspiration of the *Imam* as disclosed by a number of extracts on record and the 46th *Da'i* was apparently waiting for such inspiration for his intended nominee but it never came and he passed away."¹²

While in the case of *Imams*, it is essential that Fatimid blood should run in their veins and therefore the reigning *Imam* can make the *nas* in favour of one of his sons only, the same provision evidently does not obtain in the case of *Da'i-u'l-mutluq*. Indeed, not lineage alone but qualifications, and if it be said, divine favour qualify a person for this high office. The intention was evidently two-fold: to prevent the formation of a dynasty at the apex which would stultify the spiritual value of the office and secondly, to invest the person of the incumbent with a charisma which cannot be given by the ordinary methods of succession. In a social system which was held together by voluntary adhesion the fulfilment of both these conditions was vital for healthy continuance.

It is not possible to provide even a bare idea of the early history of Isma'ilism in the first half of the second century A.H./latter half of the ninth century A.D. Nor is it possible to indicate the unusual efflorescence of philosophy and sciences in Egypt under two centuries of Fatimid rule from its foundation under al-Mahdi in 296/909 to its virtual end with al-Amr in 524/1130. For these, reference must be made to the learned works of de Goeje, de Sacy, O'Leary, Lane-Poole, Bernard Lewis, A. A. A. Fyzee, W. Ivanow, and Zahid 'Ali.¹³

It was by the close of the Fatimid age that Musta'ali Isma'ilism reached India, the Gujarat coast. Tradition has it in the reign of *Imam* al-Mustansir-bi'l-lah (427/1036—487/1094); actually it appears that it came half a century

¹² Judgement, op. cit. 27.

¹³ The latest and one of the best studies of the Fatimid dynasty is Zahid 'Ali's *History of the Fatimids of Egypt* (Urdu). Other important works are O'Leary, deLacy. *History of the Fatimid Khalifate* (Kegan Paul, London, 1923) al-Hamdani "History of the Isma'ili dawat and its literature during the last phase of the Fatimid Empire" *JRRAS*, for 1932.

later when the schism between the two wings had already occurred.¹⁴

Al-Amr, the last of *Imams* whom the Musta'ali recognized, was killed by a Nizari in 524/1130. He prophesied the anarchy which was to follow him and placed his child, the first *Imam* of the Satr i.e. Concealed period in the charge of his *Hujjat*, Maulatana Hurrat-u'l-malika, who was then in Yemen. The assassination took place while the last *Imam* al-Tyyab was yet a child and subsequently, the deputy placed in charge usurped the *Imamat*. At this, the four *da'is*, taking the young boy disappeared from Egypt and thus the Age of Satr commenced.¹⁵ The fact that the *Imam* was henceforth to remain in seclusion is accepted by the Musta'ali Isma'ilis, the Bohras as a cardinal tenet of their faith.

For six years after his Concealment, the work of the *da'wat* was carried on by the Malika. It was she who nominated the first *da'i*, Syedna Zu'eb bin Musa, and on her death on Sha'ban 22, 532/May 5, 1133 the line of *da'is* commenced. From the first, the present *da'i* Syedna Tahir Saif-u'd-din, there have been fifty-one incumbents to this office. Of these, the first twenty-four were Yemeni; the first Indian *da'i* was Syedna Yusuf Najm-u'd-din who assumed office in 946/1539. Syedna Yusuf proceeded to Yemen which under him continued to be the headquarters but he had to face persecution and even incarceration under the Turks; with his successor, Syedna Jalal, the *da'wat* definitely shifted its headquarters to India. Syedna Jalal was the first *da'i* buried in India and henceforth, the *da'is* lived in India permanently.

We have already sketched the legends which from a historical angle have obscured but in popular memory have invested the foundation of the Musta'ali sect in India with a halo. In Bohra traditions the fact of Siddharaj Jayasingha's conversion is an accepted truth and an additional proof of this fact is provided by the lineage of the Rajput *da'is*, the 34th to the 37th, 41st to 43rd and 46th being traced to Bharmal or Siddharaj.¹⁶

¹⁴ Supra Chap. I.

¹⁵ This is the traditional view. Historical evidence also indicates that al-Amr left no son and possibly, when he died, his wife was pregnant and he appointed a Regent for the interim period. The issue however proved to be a female one at which, the Regent, the third son of Al-Mustansir-bl'i-lah assumed the *imamate*.

¹⁶ The historical narrative in this section is based mainly upon two works: *Mosam-i-Bahar* of Mian Saheb Muhammad 'Ali Saheb bin Mulla Jiwabhai Saheb and *Akhabar u'd-da'wat-u'l-Akarmin* of Isma'ilji Hasanali. The *Mosam-i-Bahar* was written by a notable functionary of the time of the 47th *da'i* Syedna Najm-u'd-din; the author's father Jiwabhai was in close touch with the *da'i* himself for the 46th *da'i* is reported to have told him that God would make him a favourite of his brother Najmuddin, after his death (Judgement, op. cit. 20). During the Burhanpur Dargah Case, it was accepted as authoritative by both the parties (Idem 20). It appears however that subsequently the book went out of favour and according to some reports, deliberately suppressed, owing to its dubious version of the *nas* on the 47th *da'i*. Its copies were extremely scarce. This is however no longer true. Recently a reprint has been issued which also contains a table of contents which was not included in the original edition.

Tradition credits the three founders with long lives. Maulai Ahmad passed away in 560/1164-65 and was buried at Patan. Nur-u'd-din who had gone to the Deccan, died three years later in a village in the Aurangabad area. 'Abd-u'l-lah died in 565/1168-69 and his tomb is a Bohra shrine in Patan. The first martyr for the new faith in Gujarat was Maulai Fakhr-u'd-din, the son of the minister Tarmal who was responsible for acquainting his master with the new faith. He was killed while engaged in a missionary task in the wild frontier zone which separates Gujarat from Malwa. The potentialities of this martyrdom were realized by the 37th *da'i* and his tomb at Galiakot is now an important pilgrim centre.¹⁷

While the headquarters of the *da'wat* remained in Yemen, the deputy ruled the community in India. The line of the *walis* is recorded in Bohra tradition and the earliest of them are said to have been descendants of Bharmal.¹⁸ The evidence appears more definite with the establishment of the Sultanate of Gujarat—and what was more important to the community which had by then two centuries behind it in Gujarat—the appearance of its first and what was to prove most injurious schism.

In 836/1432-33 Maulai Adam ibn Sulaiman passed away, succeeded by

The *Mosam-i-Bahar* is written in the peculiar Dau'di Bohra Gujarati style, full of Persian and Arabic words and having inflexions and usages, not found in the standard language. It uses the Arabic script instead of the Gujarati, based on Sanskrit. Both of these have remained the characteristics of Bohra literature in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The *Mosam-i-Bahar*, is known better and will be cited by its title, not by the author's name. It was published by Mulla Nuruddin, Booksellers, Bombay, and printed at the Safdar Press, Bombay. The book gives no publishing date but the colophon at the end of the book gives Jamad II, 19, 1299/May 8, 1882 as the date on which it was completed. In the judgement on the Burhanpur Dargah Case also it is stated that it was written in 1299/1882 and published in 1301/1884 (op. cit. 20).

Only the third volume of the *Mosam-i-Bahar*, the details of which have been given above is well-known. It deals with the history of the *da'wat*, or the *da'is* in Yemen and India and while there are historical and theological works by individual authors, there does not seem to be any comparable work of historical importance dealing with the *history* of the community in the last eight hundred years. The other two volumes deal with the history of the *Imams* and the Prophet and were published subsequently.

Recently, a reprint of the *Mosam-i-Bahar* (Vol. III only) has been published by Mulla Qurban Husain Akbar Ali Godhri, Dholkawala Building, Ground Floor, Room No. 7, Police Court Line No. 7, Bohra Bazar, Bombay-1.

The *Akhbar-u'd-Dawat-u'l-Akarmīn* is a later work published by Isma'ilji Hasanali Badripresswala, Rajkot, in 1356/1937. It was published in Urdu and was translated by Tilmiz into Gujarati, the edition which has been used here. It includes some additional details but is generally more concise than the *Mosam-i-Bahar* and often cites that work.

Since the bulk of the material used in this section is derived from these two books, references to them have been sparingly given. Only where special citation is required, is a footnote definitely stating the location of the citation is given. Corroborative evidence from Mughal and other sources has been duly mentioned with details.

¹⁷ Abd-u'l-Husain, op. cit. 113. *Mosam-i-Bahar* III, 336-7.

¹⁸ *Mosam-i-Bahar* III, 327. Genealogy in *Da'wat-u'l Akarmīn*, 221.

his son Maulala Hasanbhai. The *da'i* at this time was Syedna 'Ali Shams-u'd-din bin Syedna 'Abd-u'l-lah. One of the students who arrived in the *wali's* school at Ahmedabad was one Ja'far from Patan. Subsequently, he sought to proceed to Yemen to study under the *da'i* himself, a permission which the *wali* refused on the grounds that he had not qualified himself yet for that advanced course.

Disregarding his orders, Ja'far left Gujarat and appeared before the Syedna in Yemen. *Rawayats* report him to have lied to the *da'i* regarding his departure without leave and though the *da'i* had been informed of this fact, he forgave Ja'far and allowed him to stay and study. In Yemen he stayed for two years and asked leave to return; when the *da'i* enjoined on him to render due obedience to the *wali*, he stayed on for another year. He then left; he had then no authority to lead prayers or conduct any religious ceremony in Gujarat, a permission which could have been given only by the *wali* in Ahmedabad.

Ja'far landed in Div and was welcomed. Unaware of his limitations, the people in Div asked him to lead the prayers which Ja'far at first refused. When pressed, he accepted and led the prayers. Subsequently, he also led prayers in Bharuch and in Cambay, all without authority thus rendering them *ipso facto* void and rendering the people vulnerable to the serious charge of omitting their obligatory prayers. When he reached Ahmedabad, he was called upon to explain his conduct to the *wali*. Failing to provide a proper reply, Ja'far left Ahmedabad and proceeded to Patan. With this history behind him, he launched upon his campaign to 'misguide' the people.

In brief, Ja'far abandoned his Shi'a Isma'ili faith and embraced the Sunni creed. Bohra *rawayats* record with regret the great popularity achieved by him in north Gujarat. Mulla Raja bin Da'ud, who later succeeded Maulai Hasan as the *wali* in Ahmedabad, was at this time the *Amil* in Patan; he reported the state of affairs to Ahmedabad which in turn was carried to the *da'i* in Yemen. Syedna 'Ali asked the *wali* to come to an understanding with Ja'far but Ja'far remained adamant. Rather, he advised Mulla Raja to leave Patan which he did, moving to Morbi (840-41/1436-37).

Ja'far achieved a remarkable success in his task. Surrounding villages and towns appear to have surrendered to him with a readiness which seems surprising. By the close of the reign of Ahmed Shah, he reached Ahmedabad where the heir apparent, Mahmud Shah deputized for the Sultan. He also was won over by Ja'far and with the royal machinery at his back, he continued his missionary task with re-doubled vigour. Thus began the first spell of active persecution which the community suffered in India; Maulai Hasan had to go into hiding, mosques were closed for lack of attendance, and harassment of the faithful mounted in intensity.

This persecution continued till Ja'far's assassination near Champanir on Safar 13, 845/July 5, 1441. Bohra *rawayats* are reticent regarding his assassination and it can easily be inferred that it was one of the sorely inflicted multitude that struck the fatal blow at Ja'far. His period of oppression is said to have

lasted for two years.¹⁹

It is a pity that we know little of Ja'far and that too from the rawayats of those to whom he had done a great injury. He appears to have been a man of independent spirit and considerable intellectual acumen and spiritual powers. From available sources, it is not clear why he should have acted in a way which he knew was not justified, for instance, in leading the prayers. Obviously, sheer perversity alone could not have been responsible; nor could personal ambition have taken this course. As it is, Ja'far and his activities mark a milestone in the history of the Bohra community. Schisms took place subsequently but they took place within the fold not on the fundamental issue of faith. But with Ja'far apparently the major section of the community seceded to adopt the Sunni faith; in the words of the eighteenth century Mughal historian, 'Ali Muhammad, henceforth the secessionists were known as the *jama't-i-kalan* or the Greater Community while the orthodox were referred to as the *jam'a-it-khurd* or the Smaller Community.²⁰

The religious policy of the Sultans of Gujarat favoured this movement. With Ahmed Shah (1411-1442), in whose reign Ja'far began his secessionist movement, begins a period of what can be termed as religious bigotry, if not religious fanaticism. Ahmad Shah was the first to introduce *jiziyah* in Gujarat and to ravage the temples of Sidhpore.²¹ And as has been noted above, he and his heir apparent looked upon Ja'far's proselytizing mission with a benevolent eye.

Nearly a century later arose another figure who completed the work begun by Ja'far. Syed Ahmad Ja'far Shirazi arrived in Gujarat from Sind and established himself in the favour of Sultan Mahmud Shah Begada and his successor Sultan Muzaffar Shah (1457-1512-1526). Till then inter-marriages between the two wings had been frequent and the social unit had not been decisively split by the religious cleavage. This was the task accomplished by the learned and purist Syed; he persuaded his fellow-Sunnis to sever all links with their Isma'ili brethren. The two *jama'ts* became distinct and separate after his missionary work, moving in different directions.²²

In the meanwhile, persecution of the Isma'ili Bohras continued. In 924/1518, the *wali*, Mulla Raja Saheb Jamal-u'd-din bin Mulla Hasan was executed by the orders of the Sultan Muzaffar Shah (1512-1526). This Sultan, known as the *Halim* or Clement to the Gujarat chroniclers, was also noted for his

¹⁹ *Mosam-i-Bahar* III, 117-27. *Da'wat-u'l Akarmin*, 61-6. The names of the Sultan and his deputy are mentioned in these books.

²⁰ This, as will be seen in the following pages, crystallized in the sixteenth century after Syed Ja'far Shirazi when the two communities became totally separate. *Khatimah* (Persian Text), 130-1.

²¹ Misra *Rise of Muslim Power in Gujarat*, 175. *Mirat-i-Sikandari*, 45-6. *Tarikh-i-Firishtah* (Newal Kishore Press, Lucknow, 1884) IV, 184-5.

²² *Khatimah*, op. cit. 130-1.

piety and partiality to his faith, an iconoclasm which was exhibited on several other occasions too.²³

Mulla Raja had been a gentle and learned man who devoted a great deal of time and effort to heal the wounds suffered by his community. He earned his livelihood by making and selling soap and personally attended to his 'flock', thus winning a great reputation among them. This reputation is said to have brought about his death; he alone was able to answer an Irani Maulwi sent to the Sultan by the Shah of that country—a proficiency which earned the Sultan's ire.²⁴

Finally, as the Sultanate of Gujarat neared its end, last of these early Sunni Bohra missionaries appeared. Maulana Muhammad Tahir known as the Bohra was the first of a line of Sunni divines which provided the Mughal empire with some of its most iconoclastic and orthodox religious mentors, like his descendant, 'Abd-u'l Wahhab, who was Aurangzeb's *Sadr-u's-Sadr* and played a leading part in his persecution of the Bohras while at Ahmedabad.²⁵

Maulana Tahir, like other Gujarati scholars, learnt his tenets at Mecca and after his return, imbued with purist zeal, undertook the reform of his fellow Bohras. So vehement was his fervour against the heterodox sects that he is said to have made a vow that "until the blackness of Shi'ism had been cleansed from the hearts of his tribe, he would not bind his turban on his head". And when Akbar came to Gujarat in 980/1572-73, he fastened the turban on the Maulana's head, assuring him of his support in his self-imposed task.

With the support of Mirza Aziz Koka, appointed *Subedar* by Akbar, Maulana Tahir embarked upon a rectification campaign in which he "abolished many of the customs of his tribe". Subsequently, however, he was disenchanted with the Mughal help given to him and unwound his turban once again. Finally, this zealous endeavour won him his martyrdom; he was assassinated by a Bohra while travelling between Ujjain and Sarangpore on Shawwal 6, 986/December 6, 1578.²⁶

While crusading against the Shi'a doctrines, Maulana Tahir's success also seems to have been won against the *Mahdavi* doctrines of Syed Muhammad Jaunpuri, then recently introduced in Gujarat. In both these directions, he distinguished himself as a powerful champion of the orthodox faith.

The cumulative effect of this movement was to reduce the original Bohras to a minority. More than a million are reported to have abandoned

²³ *Mirat-i-Sikandari*, 178-9.

²⁴ *Da'wat-u'l-Akamin*, 67-9.

²⁵ For some details of his biography see the Mughal *vade mecum* for prominent nobles during the Mughal age, Shah Nawaz Khan 'Abd-u'l Havy *Ma'asir-u'l-umara* (Trans. by H. Beveridge and Baini Prasad). *Bibliotheca Indica*, 2 vols. 1941-1952 Vol. I, 74: *Khatimah*, 116-17.

²⁶ *Da'wat-u'l Akamin*, 95-6. 165. *Mosam-i-Bahar* III, 346-8.

the Isma'ili faith²⁷ and today, the Sunni Bohra community is one of the most numerous, if not the most numerous, of all the Muslim communities in north Gujarat.

As can be easily perceived, these days were not happy ones for the Isma'ili Bohra community. The Shi'a doctrine of *taqaiyya*, dissimulation was invoked for safety's sake. Till the end of the Sultanate of Gujarat, *namaz* was not read openly in mosques; only in the time of Syedna Da'ud bin Ajab Shah when Mughal rule had been firmly founded in Gujarat did the Isma'ili Bohras feel secure enough to give up their concealed system of prayers and other religious rites.

It was in this hard-pressed age, however, that the first Indian became the *da'i-u'l-mutluq*.

Syedna Yusuf Najm-u'd-din bin Sulaimanji of Sidhpore had been selected by the *wali* of Ahmedabad for being trained in Yemen during the regime of his predecessor, Syedna Muhammad Izz-u'd-din bin Syedna Idris (1526-1539). Not only did he distinguish himself in his studies but he made a name for himself by his piety and gentleness. *Rawayats* picture him as standing by the Saraswati, unclothed "as Yusuf", drying his clothes after a dip in the river, when he received the procession which had come to tell him of his elevation to the high office and escort him back to the town.²⁸

For five years, Syedna Yusuf stayed in his native town, Sidhpore, where he built a tank and a mosque. Friction appears to have developed at this time between Bohras and other communities for some unexplained reasons. This led to the rupture of trade and other relations, causing difficulties to the Bohras. Syedna Najm-u'd-din caused new shops to be opened to cater for his followers which supplied this want; ultimately, the *mushrai* realized their errors and the cordial relations were re-established.

This is the first mention of commercial activities in and by the Isma'ili Bohra community. Obviously, it does not mark the beginning but the growing emphasis on trade and commerce, now being put by a community which was being gradually squeezed out of its traditional avocations by a hostile political regime. Simultaneously, the rapid urbanization of the community tended to the diversion of more and more people towards commerce. It appears therefore very likely that the character of the Isma'ili Bohra community as an exclusively trading community stemmed partly from its history of being a discriminated and persecuted community in the age of the Sultans and after.

After this, the Syedna left for Yemen, where also the Isma'ilis were feeling the strain of persecution. The Ottoman persecution, in fact was much more severe than the Indian and Syedna Yusuf was hard pressed by the authorities.

²⁷ Vide notes 5 to 7 above. Najm-u'l Ghani Khan, *Mazahib-i-Islam*, 316-7. 'Abd-u'l Husain writes that nearly *eighty per cent* of the community seceded (op. cit. 46).

²⁸ *Da'wat-u'l Akarmin*, 85-6.

Here he passed away on Zi'l-qada 16, 974/July 4, 1567.

The Turkish persecution in Yemen made it impossible for Syedna Yusuf's successor, Syedna Jalal bin Hasan to stay there any longer. His brief office of less than half a year is therefore noticeable for the transfer of the *da'wat* headquarters to Ahmedabad.

Syedna Jalal passed away on Rabi II, 16, 975/October 20, 1567, succeeded by Da'ud bin Ajabshah. During his tenure, the influence of the Ja'faria sect under its leader Maulana Tahir registered a sharp increase. The Syedna is reported to have discomfited him in debates, especially when he was questioned about the practice of his community of observing the *I'd* according to a predetermined calendar rather than by the sight of the moon, by which other Muslims go.

By this time Mughal rule had come to Gujarat and the *da'i* no doubt encouraged by Akbar's liberalism thought of going to Agra to place the grievances of his community before the Emperor. This was felt by him to be urgent since the *Subedar* in Ahmedabad (Wazir Khan deputizing for Khan Khanan Abd'ur-Rahim Khan) did not share his master's liberalism. Some internal trouble also appeared to have flared up which necessitated his efforts at mediation and conciliation.

Before he left, he appointed Da'ud bin Qutbshah as his deputy in Gujarat, a fact which is emphasized by Da'udi text in view of the subsequent dispute regarding succession. From Ahmedabad, he is said to have first gone to Kapadwanj on Sha'ban 27, 981/December 22, 1573 owing to the high-handedness of the Mughal deputy; this appears to have been immediately after Akbar's conquest of Gujarat in 1573. Then he proceeded to Agra. In the capital, he was well received by the Emperor and the *Subedar*, Khan-i-A'zam Aziz Koka was instructed to see that no complaints of oppression reached Agra again. For the first time, therefore, since the days of Ja'far, the community became really free of apprehensions; the blanket of *taqaiyya*, dissimulation and concealment, was lifted and the prayers were said openly in mosques.

The Syedna spent his remaining years in Kapadwanj and other towns, restoring practices which had become unfamiliar in the long period of concealment and re-establishing communal organization. *Amils* or deputies were sent to Sind to further the mission and organize the followers. On Muharram 20, 986/March 29, 1578, he received at Kapadwanj the last Gujarat Sultan Muzaffar Shah III, then in rebellion against Akbar and put before him the high-handedness of his officials towards his followers—rather a pointless act since the Sultan was now himself in flight, though he is said to have freed the Bohras from all exactions in Kapadwanj.

After a remarkable career of about twenty-two years Syedna Da'ud bin Ajabshah passed away on Rabi II, 27, March Despite the activities of Maulana Muhammad Tahir which resulted in his assassination, the

Isma'ili Bohras became really free under him after a long spell of concealment.

The death of Syedna Da'ud bin Ajabshah was the occasion for a further split in the community—this time on an issue of succession.

Syedna Da'ud was succeeded by Syedna Da'ud bin Qutbshah and the latter was acknowledged as the *da'i*. Four years later, the grandson of the first Indian *da'i*, Shaikh Sulaiman bin Syedi Hasan, then an *Amil* in Yemen questioned this nomination and produced documents substantiating his own claim to the office. The result was a split; the majority of the community upheld Syedna Da'ud bin Qutbshah and came to be known as the Da'udis while a minority accepted Shaikh Sulaiman's claims and are called after him as the Sulaimanis.

Since this was the first schism in the community on an issue of succession and in some ways, the most important, Da'udi literature gives a fairly detailed account of the events, an account which is moreover corroborated in every important detail by independent Mughal sources. What is wanting, however, is a detailed narrative from the *other side*. Since an ample treatment of this issue can only be attempted within the compass of a monograph, only a sketch of the events as they shaped can be given here.

As noticed above, at the time when Syedna Da'ud bin Qutbshah acceded to his office, Shaikh Sulaiman was in Yemen and from here, he wrote letters acknowledging Syedna Da'ud as the *da'i*. The mischief, Da'udi *rawayats* aver, was begun by two widows or slave-girls of the late Syedna Da'ud bin Ajabshah, their sons, Ibrahim and Ahmad, their two brothers-in-law, sons-in-law of the late Syedna and his confidential scribe, Ahmad bin Rajmohammad. Found guilty of embezzling from the treasury, they hatched the plan of using the stolen seal to raise Shaikh Sulaiman bin Syedi Hasan to the high office.

Instigated by them, Shaikh Sulaiman had drafts prepared which indicated that the *nas-i-ja'li* has been pronounced in his favour and sent them with a trusted messenger to Ahmedabad for being properly forged and sealed. Jabir the messenger reaching Ahmedabad contacted the conspirators, had the needful done; when questioned by Syedna Da'ud regarding the object of his visit, he boldly announced his master's claim.²⁹

The Sulaimani position is naturally vitally different. The *nas-i-ja'li* had in reality been pronounced in favour of Syedna Sulaiman bin Syedi Hasan but since with the Turks in Yemen, he was not in a position where this fact could have been revealed, Shaikh Da'ud, the *mansus* was placed in charge of the office, as a temporary measure. The letters written by Syedna Sulaiman were a part of this game of hoodwinking the enemy; the truth was recognized by both parties. In fact, during the preceding *dai's* office, Shaikh Da'ud bin Qutbshah had himself written letters bearing his seal which communicated the fact of *nas-i-ja'li* to Syedna Sulaiman. However, once in power, he had no wish to

²⁹ *Da'wat-u'l Akarmin*, 110-2, *Mosam-i-Bahar* III. 190-3,

relinquish it and, when the time to do so came, he turned against his rightful master and attempted to prove himself the rightful claimant and Syedna Sulaiman, an impostor.³⁰

At this time Shahzada Murad was the *Subedar* at Ahmedabad with another prominent Mughal noble, Sadiq Muhammad Khan, as his *ataliq* (tutor).³¹ During the first stage of the dispute as it took shape, the Mughals remained out of the picture. Shaikh Sulaiman sent Jabir back to Gujarat and with the support of Zohrabai, Syedna Yusuf's daughter and Shaikh Sulaiman's aunt, his claim began to find some popular support.

Ibrahim bin Syedna Da'ud bin Ajabshah, whom Da'udi *rawayats* picture as the arch-villain of the piece took a hand in the dispute at this stage. His mother was an Abyssinian and he is called a *Habshi* in the *rawayats*. He filed a claim in the court of the *Subedar* for eighteen lakhs of rupees or one hundred and eight lakhs according to the other version, from Syedna Da'ud bin Qutbhah, as his inheritance or—what appears more likely—the legitimate due of the party which he represented from the estates of the late *da'i*, held by its incumbent.

This complaint brought in the Mughals in what had been as yet an internal dispute. Several prominent Da'udis, possibly the Syedna himself was imprisoned on this charge as Mughal officers investigated this claim.³² The incarceration of the *da'i* spread panic among the Bohras but Sadiq Muhammad Khan was favourable and release from prison was not long in coming. The Da'udis argued that since office was not a hereditary one among them and the *da'i* did not own the properties governed by him but held it in trust for his people, this claim of Ibrahim was false and fraudulent.

Relations between the two groups rapidly grew worse and soon Ibrahim and another Da'udi group came to blows in which one person was severely injured. Da'udi *rawayats* declare that Sadiq Muhammad Khan to whom the case went threatened to punish Ibrahim for his temerity by having his nose cut off unless he acknowledged Syedna Da'ud, to which he at first agreed but later demurred stating that he would do so only if his preceptor, Shaikh Sulaiman, preceded him. The Da'udis rebutted this by producing Shaikh Sulaiman's letters in which the claim had been recognized, a fact which impressed the Mughal officials, Sadiq Muhammad Khan, Abu Turab Wali and Qazi Jan Muhammad.³³

³⁰ Based on information given by Maulana Muhammad Shakir of Baroda, head of the Sulaimani community in India and Pakistan. I am thankful to the learned and courteous Maulana Sahib for this and other information regarding the Sulaimani community.

³¹ For Sadiq Muhammad Khan, see *Ma'asir-u'l-umara* (Trans.) II, 658-62.

³² Khoj bin Malik, a Da'udi writer whose several works in this period throw a flood of light on not only on the dispute but also on the social conditions of Gujarat in the sixteenth century, gives a detailed account of these events, especially of those in Ahmedabad. He also gives a long description of this town and its Bohra localities. Quoted in *Dawat-u'l-Akamin*, 144-68.

³³ Abu Turab was a notable noble from Gujarat who had joined the Mughals and has written

Their favourable reaction and its embodiment in a signed document was regarded as a great victory by the Da'udis.

As this development took place, Syedna Da'ud bin Qutbshah, anticipating trouble went into hiding.

Until now, Shaikh Sulaiman had been in Yemen where he had not only some success but also a taste of Turkish prison in which he had been languishing. Managing to escape, he arrived in Ahmedabad on Jamad I, 1, 1005/December 21, 1596. With his arrival events moved rapidly to a climax.

In the first instance, Ibrahim bin Ajabshah, emboldened, preferred to press his suit, because both Sadiq Muhammad Khan and Shahzada Murad were away in the Deccan. At first, the Mughal deputy apprehended both Ibrahim and Shaikh Sulaiman together with two prominent Da'udis; later however, he sent only Ibrahim and Sulaiman to Bharuch to await Shahzada Murad. The release of the Da'udis nevertheless led to their being freed as well.

Released from prison, Ibrahim bin Ajabshah and Shaikh Sulaiman decided to carry their suit to the Emperor, who was then in Lahore. It is however worth noting that contrary to popular belief, what was submitted to the Emperor was not the question of succession but the suit for money which Ibrahim had filed on the Syedna. How the two could be linked up is rather obscure; whether success in one was to be a step in the achievement of the other or any other plan was thought of, is not clear. What is evident is that henceforth the issue of succession and of the legitimacy thereof became secondary to the claim preferred on the Syedna by Ibrahim in the Mughal courts.

In pursuance of his plan, Shaikh Sulaiman sent his agents to Lahore and after a short while followed them himself with Ibrahim, now a leading figure in the drama. Deeply alarmed at this development, Syedna Da'ud, then in concealment, sent some of his chief advisers including Shaikh Safi'ud din, later his successor, to Lahore for countering the moves of his adversaries.

In Lahore, with the help of Khan-i-A'zam Mirza Aziz Koka, for long the *Subedar* of Gujarat, the complainants managed to lay their complaints before the Emperor. The very first thing which Akbar demanded was the presence of the Syedna in his court to meet the charge in person. This the Da'udi delegation in Lahore was extremely reluctant to agree to not only because the Syedna was in concealment but also because of their apprehensions regarding the treatment he was likely to receive—and according to the Sulaimani sources also owing to their doubts regarding their case.

The delay exasperated Akbar and he ordered Kamal Khan of Sirohi³⁴ to

a valuable account of the last days of the Sultanate of Gujarat the *Tarikh-i-Gujarat* which has been published by the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta. For him, also see, 'Abu'l Fazl *A'in-i-Akbari* Trans. I, 506, Vol I. (Trans. by A. Blochmann, *Bibliotheca Indica* 1873).

³⁴ Again, a Gujarati noble, whose family later founded the principality of Palanpur. *A'in-i-Akbari* (Trans.) I, 622.

proceed to Ahmedabad and bring the Syedna, if necessary by force, to Lahore. Reaching Ahmedabad, Kamal Khan undertook the search with great vigour and unnecessary harshness; Da'udi *rawayats* ascribe wanton acts of robbery and pillage to him. In the meanwhile however, Shaikh Safi-u'd-din had managed to contact Hakim 'Ali Gilani,³⁵ an Irani and a Shi'a; assured by him that he will guarantee full security to the Syedna and if necessary pay the decree in case, the case went against him, from his own funds and also warned by him that obduracy at this stage might prove highly dangerous—Shaikh Safi-u'd-din agreed to return to Ahmedabad and escort his master to the Emperor's presence.

On the delegation's return to Ahmedabad, Syedna Da'ud bin Qutbshah accepting the Emperor's word of *aman*, safe conduct, emerged from concealment to the great joy of his followers. Leaving Ahmedabad on Rajab 22, 1005/March 11, 1599, he reached Lahore on Ramzan 7, 1005/April 24, 1599 and staying only four days there with Hakim 'Ali Gilani, went on to Kashmir where the Emperor then was.

At this time, there occurred an incident which altered the entire complexion of events. Shaikh Sulaiman who had all along stayed at Lahore suddenly contracted at this stage, severe stomach pains and passed away on Ramzan 25, 1005/May 12, 1599. Sulaimani authorities flatly assert that he was poisoned at the connivance of Da'udi agents. This untimely death left only Ibrahim bin Ajabshah to carry the onerous burden.

The fact that he persisted in his task indicates not only his obstinacy but also the fact that he considered this issue to be an independent one from that of succession. Hakim 'Ali had him summoned to Kashmir; there both he and another Mughal noble harangued him. However, Ibrahim managed to get an interval of four months in which he could present his witnesses before the Emperor.

During his stay in Kashmir, Syedna Da'ud was treated by Akbar with consideration; on one occasion, he presented the Syedna with a Kashmiri shawl. As the summer slipped into autumn and cold began—Kashmir appears to have been hit by a season of scarcity and the cold was bitter thus necessitating a rapid descent—the Emperor constituted a tribunal consisting of 'Abu'l Fazl, Khan-i-A'zam Aziz Koka, Hakim 'Ali Gilani and Amir Ghizai to try the case at Lahore.³⁶ Syedna Da'ud instructed most of his attendants in Kashmir and Lahore to return to Gujarat and reached Lahore on Rabi II, 15, 1006/November 25, 1597. Here he awaited the session of the tribunal which was to try the case.

³⁵ Abd-u'l Qadir Bada-u'ni, the author of *Muntakhab-u't tawarikh* calls him a "rabid Shi'ah" and a bad physician. He is listed as one of the Commanders of Seven Hundred in the *A'in*. *A'in-i-Akbari* (Trans.) I, 466-8.

³⁶ Altogether a "high-power" tribunal: 'Abu'l Fazl, Akbar's biographer and if it can be said, his conscience-keeper; Khan-i-A'zam, Akbar's childhood companion and five times *Sibedar* of Gujarat, both belonging to the highest strata of Mughal nobility.

The proceedings of the tribunal appear to have been rather cursory which is not surprising considering the fact that their only account presently available is through Da'udi rawayats. They represent that Ibrahim totally failed to answer the questions put to him by the judges and his case was dismissed. The Syedna subsequently waited on the Emperor and was granted a gold-lettered *farman* and allowed to return to Gujarat. Ibrahim is said to have been apprehended but when the Emperor was near Burhanpur during the subsequent campaign, he was released.

Finally in the last days 1006/July 1598, Syedna Da'ud left Lahore for Ahmedabad after a stay in the north of nearly fifteen months.

Another case like Ibrahim's was filed later but dismissed and the Syedna was not noticeably troubled till the very end of Akbar's reign when Mirza Shadman was administering Gujarat on behalf of his father, Khan-i-A'zam Mirza Aziz Koka.³⁷ The growing pressure in Ahmedabad compelled Syedna Da'ud to leave Ahmedabad. It was not for long. Akbar's death on Jamad II, 12, 1014/October 25, 1605 led to a change of *Subedars* and Shaikh Farid, entitled, Qulij Khan³⁸ replaced Mirza Aziz Koka in Gujarat. His relations with the Syedna were cordial and his subsequent life was uneventful. He passed away on Jamad II, 10, 1021/August 13, 1612.

He was succeeded by his chief lieutenant, Syedna Adam Safi-u'd-din who had an uneventful career of nearly nine years. After his death on Rajab 7, 1030/May 18, 1621, Syedna Da'ud bin Qutbshah's son succeeded him as Syedna 'Abd-u'l-Tayyab bin Syedna Da'ud. Another succession dispute arose immediately after, leading to a fresh split in the community.

The claimant this time was 'Ali bin Ibrahim bin Syedna Adam, the grandson of the preceding *da'i* and he was supported by his paternal uncle and two others. He proceeded to Lahore where Da'udi rawayats declared him to have cultivated the Mughal nobles. With their support, he petitioned to the Emperor Jahangir that he had been expelled by Syedna 'Abd-u'l-Tayyab and he wished the Emperor to arbitrate and bring about a settlement. Upon this Jahangir summoned Syedna 'Abd-u'l-Tayyab to Lahore.

Like his father, Bohra rawayats aver, the Syedna prepared for the journey north. On the Emperor's recommendation, he forgave 'Ali. A reconciliation was arranged and both of them returned to Ahmedabad. However, 'Ali is reported to have been too unstable to keep his word; "one day, he would acknowledge; the other, he would turn away". Finally, a small group which bears his name seceded. The Alia Bohras are now a small community confined to Baroda alone.

Da'udi rawayats do not give a date for this interview but it appears to have taken place late in 1626 or early in 1627 when Jahangir was in Lahore after

³⁷ This is corroborated by 'Ali Muhammad Khan. *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* I, 184.

³⁸ For him, see *A'in-i-Akbari* (Trans.) I, 354-5. *Ma'asir-u'l-umara* (Trans.) II, 534-9.

his return from Kabul and preceding his last visit to Kashmir.³⁹

Syedna 'Abd-u'l Tayyab passed away on Rabi I, 8, 1041/September 26, 1631 and was succeeded by Syedna Ali Sham-u'd-din bin Maulai Hasan, a descendant of the 19th *da'i* Syedna Idris (d. Zi'l-qada 19, 872/May 15, 1468). After nearly a hundred and six Indian *da'is*, he is the first Yemeni to have been nominated to this office. His tenure was however very brief since he died only a year later on Rabi I, 25, 1042/September 30, 1632. He was followed by an Indian *da'i* Syedna Qasim Zain-u'd-din bin Pir Khan, a descendant of an early martyr Syedi Hasan Pir, executed in 810/1407-08. His tenure was a peaceful one and he passed away on Shawwal 9, 1054/November 29, 1644.

The appointment of Aurangzeb to Gujarat spelt the commencement of a fresh wave of persecution for the community. His arrival in Gujarat on Rabi I, 1, 1055/April 27, 1645⁴⁰ virtually followed on the footsteps of the accession of the 32nd *da'i* Syedna Qutb Khan Qutb-u'd-din bin Da'ud Burhan-u'd-din bin Qutbshah.

The main responsibility for this wanton religious interference which heralded the later events to come rests with 'Abd-u'l Qawi, the Prince's mentor and close adviser. This person, ennobled in Aurangzeb's reign as I'timad Khan was, till his assassination in 1077/1666-67, very close to Aurangzeb and as the author of *Ma'asir-u'l-umara* remarks, he was very pompous and very bigoted. It was he who ordered the execution of Sarmad, a tragic event of Aurangzeb's reign.⁴¹

This religious narrow mindedness directed his attention, when he arrived in Gujarat with Aurangzeb, to the Isma'ili Bohra community and its head. Already prejudiced, he prepared a case for the correction of the 'forbidden practices' current in that community and the proscription of their faith. It was alleged that the Bawahir held the rest of the Muslims as *rafizi*, heretics, regarded 'Ali as God and considered anyone who thought him secondary to the Prophet as deserving death, performed the *sijda*, or prostrated themselves, before the *da'i* and believed that giving presents to the *da'i* was equivalent in religious merit to *haj* and finally observed their *I'd* earlier than other Muslims. On these reports being put before him, Aurangzeb summoned Syedna Qutb Khan to his presence. The execution of this order fell to Shah Beg, the *kotwal*, fortunately for the Syedna, a Shi'a and therefore sympathetic to him.

Shah Beg arrived at the Syedna's residence early in the morning when he was busy with his *dars* or instructions to the pupils. The *kotwal* attempted to soften the rigours of the orders but with 'Abd-u'l Qawi in the background, it was not easy. As he was being removed, the *da'wat's* books too—the rawayats say that they completely filled six carts—were taken to 'Abd-u'l Qawi for scrutiny. The old man called his chief lieutenant Syedi Shuja-u'd-

³⁹ Baini Prasad, *History of Jahangir*, 421 and 424.

⁴⁰ *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* I, 220.

⁴¹ *Ma'asir-u'l Umara* (Trans.) I, 44-8.

din and asked him to precede him. He was taken by Shah Beg to his residence where he was detained. The night was an anxious one for his followers. No fires were lighted in homes and an all night vigil, punctuated by alarums was kept up. This took place on Jamad I, 25, 1056/July 3, 1646.

Next morning, when the case was placed before Aurangzeb, he asked 'Abd-u'l Qawi to prepare the charge sheet against the Syedna. This intolerant Mughal censor, resentful of the consideration with which the *kotwal* was treating his prisoner, ordered the Syedna to be transferred to the prison, where he was then taken. Simultaneously, the books seized from the *da'wat* library were gone into for the preparation of charges. For nearly three weeks while this charge sheet was in preparation, the Syedna and his companions remained in detention.

When the prosecution case was complete, the Syedna was produced before Aurangzeb. Bohra rawayats assert that in the interrogation which took place, 'Abd-u'l Qawi attempted to browbeat the *da'i* but Syedna Qutb Khan's demeanour was so dignified and his answers so courageous that the censor was afraid that it might win him his release. Consequently, he ordered the prisoner to be taken back to the prison while he set about securing other and less fair means to attain his ends.

At first, he prepared a judgement embodying a false statement that Syedna Qutb Khan acknowledges himself to be a *rafizi* or heretic and hence his execution is justified. The chief *Qazi* however refused to sign this verdict unless this acknowledgement was made in his presence. To convince him and to prove the *da'i* a *rafizi*, 'Abd-u'l Qawi had recourse to a ruse. A child belonging to the *da'i's* immediate circle was somehow secured and coached in appropriate answers. Next morning the accused and the 'witness' were produced before the *Qazi*. The leading questions which were then put to the child are revealing:

- (1) Is your Shaikh a *rafizi* or not?
- (2) Do you or do you not regard 'Ali as or in the place of God?
- (3) Do you or do you not hold 'Ali as equal to the Prophet?
- (4) Are the *Khulfa-i-Rashidun*, the first three Khalifas who preceded 'Ali, regarded as inimical to the faith, or not?
- (5) Do you regard other Muslims as *Khariji*, expelled or fallen, or not?
- (6) Is *sijda* (prostration) done before your *da'i* in the manner it should be done before God, or not? Do you do it?
- (7) Do you think that the *sawab* (religious merit) of presenting money to your Shaikh is equivalent to that of *haj*?
- (8) Do you celebrate *I'd* in advance of other Muslims or not?
- (9) Do you hold as *Ghazis*, those persons who kill those who do not regard 'Ali as equal to the Prophet?
- (10) Do you consider the followers of Shaikh Qutb alone as *naji* (those who will go to heaven) and those who do not as *halaki* (destined for

perdition)?

The child, innocent of the deadly significance of these loaded questions, answered every one, as he had been coached, in the affirmative. On the basis of this evidence, the *Qazi* though he understood the true nature of the farce, signed the judgement and issued the order for Syedna Qutb Khan's execution. This took place on Jamad II, 27, 1056/August 10, 1646 late at night.

Orders for death required confirmation in the Mughal age but this order does not appear to have been referred to Shah Jahan in Agra. During the night, in the presence of witnesses, the Syedna nominated Shaikh Shuja-u'd-din as his successor. Next morning, among widespread mourning, he was martyred. He met his end with the same calm dignity which had characterized him throughout his unfair trial.

The doctrinaire fanaticism of Aurangzeb and his religious mentor did not stop even at this; the dead body of the Syedna was sought to be dishonoured. It was buried in the sands of Sabarmati and guards were posted to see that it was not removed. Nevertheless, it was taken out and he was buried in the Bibipura cemetery in Ahmedabad.

The Muslim day is counted from sundown to sundown. Hence, the execution of the Syedna is said to have taken place on the same day, the judgement was pronounced, viz. Jamad II, 27, 1056/August 10, 1646. At the time of his death, Syedna Qutb Khan was seventy-one years old.

Aurangzeb's stay in Gujarat is tarnished by another act of gratuitous religious fanaticism, also inspired by 'Abd-u'l Qawi which resulted in the death of Syed Raju, the *mahdavi* leader and his twenty-two companions. He also desecrated a Jain temple. In brief, his *subedari* here was a fair sample of the policy which was to bring down the Mughal empire, which then was at its zenith.

Consequent on the execution, a vehement campaign to either purify the Da'udi Bohras or to expel them was launched under the aegis of the Prince. An order of his guaranteed *aman* or safety to any Da'udi Bohra who turned a Sunni while holding threats to the rest, with the result that a great number fled Ahmedabad, to escape the imminent danger.

Simultaneously, a number of new regulations were framed directed against the Bohras. Bohra women were to wear ivory bangles and their menfolk to smoke tobacco pipes and trim beards, like the Mughal nobles. For mosques, Sunni *pesh-Imams*, prayer leaders were appointed and those who failed to attend were punished. The community therefore once again took recourse to its safety mechanism, *taqaiyya*; *namaz* was read both at home and in the mosque and a double set of ceremonies came to be widely practiced.

Fortunately for the sorely pressed community, Aurangzeb could stay only four months in Gujarat after the execution of Syedna Qutb Khan. In November 1646 he left, after making over the charge to Shaistah Khan.⁴² But before

⁴² Commissariat *History of Gujarat* (Vol. II, Orient Longmans, 1957), 127.

he left Gujarat, he made Syedna Pir Khan Shuja-u'd-din and his principal lieutenants accompany him in his campaigns. Before he left, Syedna Pir Khan nominated Shaikh Isma'ilji Badr-u'd-din of Jamnagar as his successor, in case he shared the fate of his predecessor.

Though the enforced departure of its head afflicted the community with a numbing anxiety, yet the departure of the iconoclastic Prince freed the Bohras from a heavy pressure. Shaistah Khan was no bigot. Discriminatory orders were rescinded, freedom of religion was proclaimed and those who had profited from recent disturbances were even fined. Sunni *pesh-Imams* were removed from Bohra mosques and their former incumbents reappointed thus restoring religious freedom to them.

Syedna Pir Khan accompanied Aurangzeb to the Deccan and then to the north. Bohra rawayats picture him to have been kept in a condition of hardship and indignity, in a hut by the side of the stables. In Aurangabad, the rawayats assert that the Prince had virtually decided to execute the Syedna but he was saved, as his death was not then acceptable to God. Probably, Aurangzeb had not made up his mind and therefore did not know what action to take.

Rawayats again picture the Syedna to be a model of patient dignity in these days of hardship. His release was gained by this composure. A fire broke out in the stables and Aurangzeb, visited the hutments adjacent, in which the Syedna and his companions were lodged. Courteously, the Syedna and his companions stood up to receive him. This gentleness in face of his persistent harshness towards them impressed Aurangzeb. They were released with costly presents and the small group returned to Ahmedabad travelling through Sironj, Ujjain, Dohad and Godhra.

The respite lasted till the arrival of Ghairat Khan as deputy for Prince Dara Shukoh to whom the province was entrusted after the transfer of Shaistah Khan, on Jamad II, 21, 1058/July 14, 1648. Ghairat Khan, a favourite of Dara Shukoh, who had administered Allahabad for the Prince, entered Ahmedabad on the Dashehra day, 1648/Ramzan 8, 1058/October 17, 1648.⁴³

It could hardly have been expected that a deputy of a man like Dara Shukoh could fall foul of the Bohras or any other sect. Reports were however carried to him that the Bohras had collected a sum of rupees three lacs and had offered it to Aurangzeb as ransom for Syedna Qutb Khan. Aurangzeb refused it and had the Syedna executed on which this money was made over to his successor. It should therefore be recovered from him, by what logic, it is not clear.

Syedna Pir Khan disclaimed knowledge of any such transaction and for the second time, found himself in prison. After having been there for over a month, he sent a trusted agent, Ahmad, to the capital to move to secure his release. Ahmad did go to Agra but returned immediately without any result and in-

⁴³ 'Ali Muhammad Khan *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* I, 224. *Ma'asir-u'l-Umara* (Trans.) I, 338.

formed the Syedna that he had been told that his task would require at least a year and he had therefore come back. Deeply disappointed, Syedna Pir Khan rebuked him for his failure—and laid the basis for another secession.

Finally, nearly two months after Ahmad's return and nearly eight months of imprisonment, orders were received to release the Syedna honourably. It is said that the Syedna went straight to Sabarmati to wash off the indignity of his long confinement; only when he was in the river that the people knew that he was free and came out to take him into the city with suitable honours.

Trouble on Ahmad's score now began. Not only did he feel mortified at the rebukes levelled at him but felt threatened with ex-communication, a potent weapon which had even in recent times been wielded with good effect.⁴⁴ Consequently, he began to draw together his friends into an anti-*da'i* move and his house became a nucleus of a hostile movement.

Efforts at reconciliation were made but at their failure the mediator, one Yusuf Chandji, joined Ahmad. The lead of the new movement was taken by him followed by Ahmad and Chandmiyan Abuji. In this order they succeeded to the headship of the new sect, known later as the Hujumiyan.

In the beginning, it appears to have gained some strength though its attempts to win over the Syedna's nominated successor, Shaikh Isma'ilji of Jamnagar, failed. In 1064/1653-54, when Murad was the *Subedar* in Ahmedabad, Ahmad is said to have complained against the Syedna and thus had him cast once again into prison. It was only when a great deal of money was spent, possibly in bribes, that the Syedna regained his freedom.

After his release Syedna intended to go on pilgrimage to the mausoleum of Hasan Pir. He stayed at his daughter's place for three days and on Zi'l-qada 6, felt sudden pain. Of this sharp intestinal pain, he died three days later on Zi'l-qada 9, 1065/September 10, 1655. It was strongly suspected that he was the victim of poisoning—the same idea that was to cling to the death of his successor nearly two hundred years later, the 47th *da'i*, Syedna Muhammad Badr-u'd-din.

Syedna Isma'ilji Badr-u'd-din bin Mulla Raj, the first Rajput *da'i*, traced ancestry back to Bharmal, the legendary figure whom Bohra *rawayats* identify with Siddharaj Jayasingha. Mulla Raj, his ancestor had been *Amil* in Patan when the Ja'faria trouble broke out, compelling him to move to Morbi. Since then his family had been in Saurashtra and it had contributed some notable Shaikhs. The new *d'ai* stayed at Jamnagar.

The Hujumiyan sect remained active during Syedna Isma'ilji's time though

⁴⁴ The Burhanpur Dargah Case hinged on this problem of excommunication and in 1962, Syedna Tahir Saif-u'd-din appealed against the Bombay Prevention of Excommunication Act of 1949 which forbade excommunication and won his case in the Supreme Court.

efforts to win over Ahmad were made; otherwise, his tenure of nine years, embracing the early period of Aurangzeb's reign and one of the most prosperous in Gujarat, remained uneventful. On Jamad II, 23, 1085/September 24, 1674, he passed away and was succeeded by his son Syed 'Abd-u'l Tayyab Zaki-u'd-din.

It was in his time that the impact of the new religious policy initiated by Aurangzeb, the foretaste of which had been given during his short governorship of Gujarat, was felt by the community. By now, the famous interdict of 1665 had virtually ended that age of toleration which despite occasional lapses had characterized the Mughal era. Besides, Jamnagar had been made *khalsa*, directly administered territory, in 1663 and was no longer a safe haven.

Syedna Isma'ilji had not visited Ahmedabad after his accession but his son visited it by the end of 1085/early 1675. It is said that he wished to stay here permanently and for the time being all seemed well. On Rabi I, 15, 1091/April 15, 1680, he held a public assembly to pronounce the *nas* in favour of his son, Musa Kalim-u'd-din. By about 1093/1682-83, Bohra rawayats declare, reports against the Syedna began to be carried to the *Subedar*, then Mukhtar Khan, though the rawayats do not mention him by name.⁴⁵ Orders to arrest him were issued but the Syedna, forewarned escaped in time and reached Nawanagar (Jamnagar). In his stead in Ahmedabad, a number of prominent Bohras were seized and sent to Aurangzeb, then at Aurangabad.

From these rawayats, the real reasons of the *Subedar's* measures do not become clear. 'Ali Muhammad Khan, the author of *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* provides another version, though he places the event in 1116/1704-05 when Prince Muhammad A'zam was the *Subedar* and Syedna Isma'ilji's son, Syedna Musa Kalim-u'd-din was the *da'i*.⁴⁶

In this year, writes 'Ali Muhammad, that two men of the name of I'sa and Taj, retail-cloth shop-keepers by profession, were collecting money and spreading the principles of false religion. Hence the Prince, according to Imperial orders apprehended them, had securities taken and then released them on condition that they would not act likewise in future. However, the *Sadr* of the province reported to Aurangzeb through Shaikh Nur-u'l Haq that these two persons though apprehended by the Prince had been released on security, and they were continuing their work in clandestine ways; therefore if an order was sent privately, he would arrest them and send them to the Emperor.

Apparently in these matters, Aurangzeb listened more to his religious than to his political agents and the requisite orders were sent. Taj and I'sa were sent under arrest to Aurangzeb.

Simultaneously, another case developed. It was brought to the Emperor's notice that one Khanji, deputy of the Qutb formerly executed, was, with the help of twelve other persons, deputed by the *da'i* for misguiding the people into the ways of the false faith. Besides, they had collected a lac and fourteen thousand rupees for the release of persons of their faith, imprisoned by royal orders and

⁴⁵ Commissariat, op. cit. 182. *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* I, 303-6.

⁴⁶ *Mirat-i-Ahmadi* I, 356 and 358-9.

this amount was still with them, unspent. In addition to this money, they had sixty of their religious books in their possession.

This information excited not only the religious bigotry of the Emperor but also his cupidity and he ordered the *Diwan* of the province that with the help of Qazi Abu'l-Fath, these men should be arrested and sent to the Emperor's presence together with the money and the books. In addition, and here the *Qazi's* sphere of action was defined, teachers for educating the Bohras, both old and young, were to be appointed in every *pargana* and town and they were to be compulsorily taught the tenets of the Sunni faith—monthly tests were to be given to them to see that they did not idle either by deliberation or otherwise. Regular progress reports of this educational campaign were to be forwarded to the Emperor.

'Ali Mohammad places these events, as we have seen, in 1115/1704-05 while Bohra *rawayats* ascribe the commencement of this persecution wave to about 1093/1682-83 when Syedna 'Abd-u't-Tayyab left Ahmedabad in face of a threat that had killed one of his immediate predecessors and haunted the other. About this time also, it is said, that Aurangzeb was informed of the two mausolea in Ahmedabad, visits to whom was held to be equivalent to *haj* by the Da'udi Bohras—and immediate orders were given to raze them to the ground.

Simultaneously, orders were given banning a number of 'objectionable' practices. Visits to tombs were forbidden. The Isma'ili *I'd* usually observed in advance to that of the other Muslims, since it is fixed by calendar and not contingent on the sighting of the moon, was proscribed and the Bohras were made to observe fast on their festival day and give it up on others. Mourning assemblies during the Muharram days were forbidden, both in homes and public places. Sunni *pesh-Imams* were appointed to the mosques and absentees were punished, if *rawayats* are to be credited, by flogging. Even death services had to be conducted by these functionaries. In brief, prohibited practices were forced upon the Bohras and the enjoined ones prohibited. And to climax it all, large money exactions were made in every place.

In Nawanagar, an attempt to seize Syedna 'Abd-u'l-Tayyab fortunately miscarried. The age of Ja'far and Kamal Khan, Bohra *rawayats* declare, returned once again. A virtually universal *taqaiyya* blanketed the community and robbed it of most of its activity in the face of these inquisitorial regulations.

At the same time, severe famines broke out in Gujarat and the Deccan. Bohra accounts do not give the years of this visitation but it was evidently the famine of 1684-85 which caused widespread distress. *Rawayats* declare that even Aurangzeb was moved to ask his prisoners pray for rain—and when their prayers were answered, he is said to have relented and released them as well as reduced the pressure on the sorely pressed community.

The effort to seize him in Nawanagar made the Syedna leave that town too and retire to Khambhalia, the capital of the expelled Jadeja ruler of Jamnagar. It was here that he lived during the period of trial through which his followers were made to pass. It was in Nawanagar however that he died on Zi'l-qada 12, 1110/May 12, 1699, succeeded by his son, Syedna Musa Kalim-u'd-din.

The tenure of Syedna Musa Kalim-u'd-din was synonymous with the last decade of the 'Alamgiri era. But somehow, it is not clear why, trouble with the Jadeja ruler of Jamnagar, also living in Khambhalia since the establishment of Mughal rule in Jamnagar, developed. This ruler, though the Bohra *rawayats* do not give his name, was Lakhaji (1690-1709).⁴⁷ The trouble resulted in the imprisonment of the Syedna's son and the nominated successor, Syedi Nur Muhammad. While his father was in office, Syedi Nur Muhammad remained in detention most of the time and was released only after the payment of three lacs of Mahmudis—a Gujarati coin which appears to have been current in that distant part of Saurashtra.

The imprisonment of his son affected the Syedna deeply and it is said that he passed away the very next day his son was released (Rabi I, 22, 1123/May 21, 1710).

On his release and accession, Syedna Nur Muhammad Nur-u'd-din left Nawanagar for Dhrol where he stayed but after the death of Jam Lakhaji, his son Jam Raisinghji (1709-18), invited him back to that city.⁴⁸ On his return, he built a large mosque in that town. Subsequently, he moved to Mandvi where he died on Rajab 4, 1130/May 4, 1718, succeeded by his cousin and brother-in-law Syedna Isma'ilji Badr-u'd-din bin Shaikh Adam Safi-u'd-din.

The pressure from the Jam appears to have been revived in the days of Syedna Isma'ilji and he had to move from Jamnagar to Kacchh, first staying for sometime in Mundra and then in Anjar. For a time therefore, Kacchh became the headquarters of the *da'wat*.

Syedna Isma'il is known for his liberality to poor students and for his partiality for playing the host, so much so that he is credited with establishing a tradition of treating a guest with exemplary hospitality. Besides, he laid down four rules to strengthen the *da'wat*; not to give communal dinners without the permission of the *da'i* for it entailed ruinous expenditure often for those who were unable to bear it; to have the *namaz-i-wasiqa* read; to attend the ten mourning assemblies held during the first days of Muharram; and to read a chapter of *Qura'an* after every morning prayer.

In his time, the Hujumiyans returned to the fold, its *da'i*, Latifbhai, submitting to the *Ma'zun* and being made a Shaikh.

⁴⁷ Commissariat, op. cit. II, 169.

⁴⁸ Bohra *rawayats* do not give the name of the person who harassed the Syedna, whether he was a Mughal official at Nawanagar or the Jam. Since a few references are made to the Jam, it appears that it was the Jam in Khambhalia who was involved.

The *da'i* is said to have been pressed to re-establish his headquarters in Ahmedabad but he preferred Saurashtra. In Mundra, Kacchh, he pronounced the *nas* on his successor Syedi Wajih-u'd-din bin Syedi 'Abd-u'l Qadir Hakim-u'd-din. He came back to Nawanagar where he passed away on Muharram 7, 1150/May 7, 1737.

Syedna Ibrahim Wajih-u'd-din's accession marks a shift both in the dynastic line and the headquarters of the *da'wat*. His father Syedi 'Abd-u'l Qadir Hakim-u'd-din belonged to Malwa, having been settled for long in Rampur, a small principality in north-west Malwa whose ruler had accepted Islam during the reign of Shah Jahan. He had risen during the office of the late *da'i* and his influence had been widespread in Malwa and neighbouring areas, outside Gujarat. During the latter half of Syedna Isma'il's reign, he had been his *Ma'zun* and would have succeeded him had he not died in Burhanpur on Shawwal 5, 1142/April 23, 1730.

Syedna Ibrahim received the message of his elevation and a testament of his predecessor at Ujjain which became his headquarters. The testament clearly laid out that the *da'wat* was destined for Shaikh Adam Safi-u'd-din bin Syedna Nur Muhammad Nur-u'd-din; in other words, a return to the former dynasty.

Much of the attention of Syedna Ibrahim were spent in arranging matches between his family and of the late *da'i* which would strengthen its position in the *da'wat*. He married his daughter to 'Abd-i-Musa, and his son's daughter to Syedi 'Abd-u'l-Tayyab both sons of Syedna Isma'il. These marriages took place in 1150/1737-38 soon after his accession. Nearly ten years later in 1160/1747-48, he married the widow of Shaikh Adam Safi-u'd-din, who had died in the meanwhile, to his son and nominated successor Syedna Hibt-u'l-lah Mu'iyad.

Even with these preparations, the Syedna found it hard to bypass the definite injunction laid down in his predecessor's testament until he is said to have been supernaturally inspired to pronounce the *nas* in favour of his son, Syedi Hibt-u'l-lah, for Shaikh Adam was to be 'joined to his forefathers' soon. This he did shortly before 1158/1745, when Shaikh Adam passed away.

The unsettled period in Malwa, during the age of transition in the eighteenth century had led to the growth in the power of petty rulers. The Bohras and their leaders, as a trading community attracted attention in these times of trouble. In Rampur, the death of the ruler favourable to the Bohras led to trouble with Syedi Hibt-u'l-lah who was there. In Ujjain, a similar pressure was felt which led both Syedna Ibrahim and his son to proceed to Burhanpur where Syedi Hakim-u'd-din was buried. For five years, till the beginning of 1158/February 1745, he remained at Burhanpur which became one of the important centres of the community.

The rest of Syedna's life was spent in Ujjain and Rampur. His son and nominated successor, Syedi Hibt-u'l-lah undertook wide tours. In Surat,

the community had some trouble for the covetous glances of the Nawab had been attracted by this trading community, as Bohra rawayats assert. More probably, the Syedna became involved in the conflict of power then raging at Surat, before the English occupation early in 1759.

He was arrested and released on a security of a lac of rupees but before the matters proceeded further, he left Surat secretly and managed to gain Billimora which was in Gaekwar territory. From there, he proceeded to Songarh and thence to Ujjain which he reached late in 1177/middle of 1764.

It was about this time that the Hibt-u'l-lah sect came into existence. Its two leaders were Shaikh Isma'il-bin 'Abd-u'l Rasul and his son Shaikh Hibt-u'l-lah. Shaikh Isma'il had studied under Syedi Luqmanji, one of the noted teachers of the age and had himself been given the status of the Shaikh by the Syedna. Briefly, the Hibtia claim was that they had established direct contact with the *Imam* and the position of the *Da'i-u'l-balagh*, a higher one than that of *Da'i-u'l-mutluq* had been awarded to Shaikh Isma'il. Thus they had replaced the existing *da'wat* by virtue of their superior authority.

The same claim was preferred by Hibt-u'l-lah later and also his successor Sulaiman. Bohra rawayats declare that Hibt-u'l-lah also claimed to be the son-in-law of the *Imam* and thus far outrank the Syedna in status. By these claims, it appeared that Hibt-u'l-lah and his partisans expected the Syedna and his staff to yield their places to them.⁴⁹

This was a novel method and by its nature not without sincerity. Syedna Hibt-u'l-lah is said to have attempted to conciliate his namesake and bring him back quietly to the fold but without success. For a time, it appeared that they submitted but then, they fled to Lunawara where they propagated their doctrines. By this time, the nucleus of an organization of the seceders had also taken shape; when at the Syedna's instance, Isma'il was seized in Lunawara, his *Ma'zun* fled the place. They were brought back to Ujjain and again, Isma'il submitted. The effect was short-lived. Soon they reasserted the claim and the Syedna had to restrain his votaries from laying violent hands on him.

Nevertheless, this immunity lasted only a few days and in a second attack on their return to Ujjain Shaikh Isma'il managed to break free, but his son lost his nose. "Apparently, the mania of the orthodox Bohra fanatics of Ujjain", writes Mianbhai Mulla Abdul Husain, author of the *Gulzar-e-Daudi*, "for cutting the noses of a dissenter is getting hereditary for recently they have cut the nose of a suspected dissenter who had joined the Mahdibagh camp."⁵⁰

Several legends are recorded related Hibt-u'l-lah. The *Mosam-i-Bahar* records them in detail. He claimed to have been appointed the superior most functionary in the Isma'il hierarchy, next to the *Imam* and to have married

⁴⁹ *Mosam-i-Bahar* III, 440-502, esp. 447. In the *Da'wat u'l-Akamin*, details are omitted.

⁵⁰ 'Abd-u'l Husain, *Gulzar-i-Daudi* 49.

his daughter. Evidently, such high-flown claims were not likely to be entertained and the stringent opposition of the orthodox group backed by the consistent tours of the Syedna succeeded in quashing their mission. A fact which was profitably used against them was the dubious marriage which Hibt-u'l-lah consummated with one of his father's divorced wives.

Both Shaikh Isma'il and his son were distinguished scholars. They compiled an extremely valuable bibliographical catalogue of Isma'ili works called the *Fihrist al-Majdu* on the basis of which Ivanow's *Guide to Isma'ili Literature* was prepared.⁵¹ Some of the notable scholars of the age, close to the *da'i*, whose names are given in the rawayats, praise them; one of them, a grandson of the celebrated scholar Syedi Luqmanji, remarks in his work, in praise of Shaikh Isma'il, that by comparison to these two scholars, the *bayans* (speeches and writings) of the orthodox Shaikhs are like the skins (of fruits) while theirs are like the real kernel inside.⁵² Evidently, they made their mark, though it was not long-lived.

The short-lived ascendancy of the Hibtia sect made Syedna Hibt-u'l-lah maintain the tempo of his touring activities among his followers. After a tour of Malwa, he went to Aurangabad on the invitation of Shaikh Jiwanji bin Shaikh Dau'dbhai, from whom was to commence the third line of *da'is*, after the present two. Here however, he faced trouble for the local official became covetous of his wealth and he had to leave the town. He stayed for some time in Daulatabad.

News of trouble flaring up in Ujjain was received, compelling the Syedna to return. Passing through Burhanpur, he reached his headquarters on Safar 2, 1183/June 7, 1769. Here a sharp quarrel appears to have been precipitated between two groups of Bohras. The reasons of this trouble are not clear. In Ujjain, the Syedna stayed on for some time more and then embarked on his tours.

During this tour, the Syedna visited Burhanpur and then Surat where he reached on Rabi I, 1, 1186/June 2, 1772. At this time Surat was controlled by the English under the nominal suzerainty of the Nawab and representatives of the Syedna had approached the English headquarters in Bombay for procuring the safe-conduct, probably required in view of his earlier escape from the town. For the next three years, he stayed in Surat, which now, with the English security given to it, began to assume greater importance in the affairs of the *da'wat*.

In 1188-90/1774-76, the Syedna toured Gujarat before returning to Ujjain. Trouble occurred here also but the Syedna is said to have overcome it. He went to Rampur and Sironj on short visits but by now his health had begun to decline. He passed away on Shaban 1, 1193/August 14, 1779.

⁵¹ Zahid 'Ali, op. cit. 662.

⁵² *Mosam-i-Bahar* III, 492. *Da'wat-u'l-Akamin*, 291.

Syedna Hibt-u'l-lah was an accomplished man, among other things an Urdu poet. His career bridged an important transition period during which he gave to his people an able guidance. His defence against the Hibt-u'l-lah attack protected the community from a serious secession, and from the Bohra accounts, both the leading figures in this movement appear to have been men of considerable ability. His political relations were equally consummate; with the Mughal Emperor, Shah 'Alam from whom he received a farman for the *Qaziship* of Ujjain, with Peshwa Madhav Rao and Nana Phadnis whom he visited in Poona, with Mahadaji Sindhia and the Holkar rulers of Indore and finally with the British who by this time had come to control south Gujarat—with all these powers, generally at loggerheads with each other—he maintained cordial relationships.⁵³

The dynasty of Malwa was however short-lived. Syedna Hibt-u'l-lah was succeeded by his son-in-law 'Abd-u'l-Tayyab Zaki-u'd-din bin Syedna Isma'ilji Badr-u'd-din. This meant the Rajput dynasty. This also meant the abandonment of Ujjain as the headquarters; Syedna 'Abd-u'l-Tayyab remained mostly in Jamnagar and died in Burhanpur.

Much of Syedna 'Abd-u'l-Tayyab's time was spent in Gujarat where British influence was fast replacing that of the Marathas. It was in Kacchh that he received the news of his elevation and from there he came to Jamnagar where he appointed his son Adam Safi-u'd-din as his *Ma'zun*. In 1194-95/1781-82, he stayed in Surat. The use of liquor and tobacco, rather surprisingly, was on the increase among the Bohras of this town. This he forbade before returning to Jamnagar from where he left for Burhanpur in 1199/1785. In this town, he passed away on Safar 2, 1200/December 5, 1785.

His son, Syedna Muhammad Yusuf Najm-u'd-din bin Syedna 'Abd-u'l-Tayyab Zaki-u'd-din was only twenty-three when he succeeded his father. With him, Surat became the headquarters of the *da'wat*, most probably because, the direct control of the English made it a welcome asylum. He is said to have continued his father's crusade against the undesirable habits which had crept in amongst the Bohras. In 1202/1786-87, when a famine threatened Surat, he proceeded to Jamnagar, his ancestral seat.

Subsequently, he proceeded to Burhanpur where he married his brother, and later his successor, to the sister of Miansaheb Jiwanji of Aurangabad, whose family began now to gain in importance. He then toured Malwa before returning to Surat where he built the spacious buildings in which he lived and which became the headquarters of the *da'wat*.

It appears that the Syedna suffered from ill-health from the beginning, a malady which began to grow serious after 1213/1798. He hardly moved out of Surat in his later days and on Jamad II, 16, 1213/November 27, 1798, he passed away.

⁵³ Syedna 'Abd-u'l-Qadir Najm-u'd-din's Persian letter to W. E. Brere, Agent to the Governor of Bombay, Surat, reproduced in the *Gulzar-i-Daudi*, 216-20.

He was only thirty-four.

He was succeeded by his brother Syedna 'Abde-'ali Saif-u'd-din bin Syedna 'Abd-u't-Tayyab Zaki-u'd-din, only twenty-four years old at this time. From Surat, he proceeded to Morbi where he preferred to stay and which he developed. However, he appears to have been troubled by the unsettled conditions around which made the livelihood of his people difficult besides rendering them an easy target for local potentates.

The year after his accession, 1214/1799-1800, one Chandji Kharji created some 'trouble' in Aurangabad, the reason of which is not given. Syedna 'Abde-'Ali sent the *Amil* of Bombay to pacify the trouble which he did. This was followed by a series of bereavements for him in which two of his wives passed away and on Zi'l-qada 7, 1217/February 1, 1803 his brother Syedi 'Abd-u'l Qadir Hakim-u'd-din died. This affected him deeply.

Other troubles followed. News from Malwa reported tension in Rampur while in Bombay a widespread fire affected many people. Political troubles were reported from Ratangarh in Malwa. In Gujarat itself, natural calamities afflicted the people. First the Tapti rose in floods and flooded Surat and later in 1220/ 1805, there was widespread famine in northern Saurashtra. On both occasions, the Syedna is said to have helped the people considerably.⁵⁴

His name is also associated with the foundation of the *dars* or school, which has now expanded into the Jami'a Saifiya. He is also credited with the preparation and implementation of a code for the help and guidance of the *Amils* which defined their duties and effected a great improvement in their work. He also laid down that while attendance in mourning assemblies for the first ten days of Muharram was obligatory, vulgar practices, like public wailing and beating the breasts during these days, were to be strictly forbidden.

On the whole, the Syedna's tenure was quiet. Like his brother however, he also suffered from ill-health. In 1228/1813, its effects began to be apparent and he died on Zi'l-qada 12, 1232/September 23, 1817.

Syedna 'Abde-'ali Saif-u'd-din's office saw the virtual end of Maratha domination in Central India and the pacification of that land by the subjugation of the Sindhia and Holkar rulers. Simultaneously in Gujarat, the British emerged supreme though it was not until 1820 that Saurashtra was fully pacified. The age of persecution was now virtually at an end though the age of his successor had its share of minor troubles. Problems of a different sort came in, especially regarding the organization of the community, not in a time of tension when it is relatively easy, but in a time of peace.

That this was by no means easy was indicated by the troubles experienced by his successors. In part, they appeared to have begun with his immediate successor—Mohammad Izz-u'd-din bin Shaikh Jiwanji Aurangabadi who was his

⁵⁴ The compendium of the town of Surat *Surat—sona ni surat* (Ishwarlal Iccharam Desai, Surat, 1949) gives a description of these floods. p. 130.

wife's brother but was fifteenth in the order of his *hudud*, the official hierarchy. It is by no means clear what lay behind this nomination and why, when it was first made in 1228/1813, the Syedna ordered it to be kept a secret. Obviously, he anticipated opposition, though there was no widespread trouble immediately, as the historians note.

It is possible that as had been the case previously, the Syedna wished to preserve the right of his two young sons. The Rajput dynasty could once again stage a come-back as it did previously. Some such understanding appears to have been there, however vague it might have been, and in turn, it did affect the position of the new dynasty. It is true that the idea of *nas* theoretically rules out dynastic consideration but patterns which had been apparent in the past amply proved that this was not always possible.

The life of Syedna Muhammad Izz-u'd-din was unfortunately, like his two predecessors, short. He was twenty-nine when he succeeded and died four years later on Ramzam 19, 1236/June 20, 1821 after nominating his elder brother Syedna Tayyab Zain-u'd-din as his successor.

Syedna Tayyab had to face trouble—disasters, natural and man made, from the very inception. The very next year after his accession, Surat had unprecedented floods which scarred its memory for years to come. And in 1239/1839, he was invited to Malwa and reached Mandasore on Rabi II, 25, 1240/December 17, 1824.

In Mandasore too undesirable habits like the use of tobacco and intoxicants had spread among the Bohras against which the Syedna campaigned. But soon, he had a more formidable problem. Friction between the Bohras and other Muslims developed—provoked according to Bohra accounts by a Maulwi named Ramzan 'Ali. This person wantonly attacked and wounded a *momin* passing in front of a mosque and this led to a scuffle in which the Arabs appeared in the defence of the Bohras. In consequence, Maulwi Ramzan 'Ali paid for his temerity and was killed by a shot from an Arab's musket. This unforeseen development worsened the situation to the extent that an infuriated mob surrounded the house where the Syedna was staying. One of the shots even entered the room where the Syedna then was.

A number of people, both Bohras and others, were killed in the rioting which was quelled only when a white regiment from Neemuch, a nearby cantonment station, was requisitioned. Armed guards protected the Syedna and his residence while inflamed Muslim elements made life perilous for the Bohras; one of the Maulwis even issued a *fatwa*, allegedly legitimizing the assassination of these *rafizis*. Rioting flared up again on Jamad II, 29, 1240/February 18, 1825, necessitating the troops being called out. In this strife-torn town, Syedna Tayyab stayed till Rajab 13, 1240/March 3, 1825. On one occasion, an attempt was made to set fire to the building in which he was staying.

From Mandasore, he proceeded to Indore and then to Ujjain, reaching there

on Shawwal 21/June 8, Ujjain was uncomfortably near Mandasore and another Maulwi, Mazhar 'Ali was publicly calling for vengeance for Ramzan 'Ali. The Syedna's arrival led to rioting and organized attacks on Bohra localities. The worsening situation could be brought under control only when the troops from Neemuch were called for and Maulwi Mazhar 'Ali arrested.

In the meanwhile trouble brewed in another quarter. On Safar 1, 1241/September 15, 1825, during the Jain festival of *Paryushan* which enjoins fasting among other religious rituals, a Bohra invited the community to dinner. Since this period is held as unusually auspicious by the Jains and so being an influential community in a town within the Sindhia state of Gwalior, they had managed to secure a ban on animal slaughter. The Bohras considered a feast—and moreover a feast in which the Syedna was going to be present—completely impossible without meat and therefore arranged for slaughtering to be done privately.

Reports of this activity were carried to the officials while a mob attacked the house where the cooking was being done, causing loss and destruction. Fortunately for the Syedna and his people, the outcome of this episode was beneficial; while the local officials ruled against them, the higher Gwalior authorities not only made proper restitution but also guaranteed them the right to live in their own way.

For seven months after this episode, the Syedna stayed in Ujjain and then returned to Surat, visiting Rampur on the way, reaching there on Zil-hujja 11, 1241/July 17, 1826. Here he stayed for some time, arranging family matches. He married his daughter to Syedi Muhammad Badr-u'd-din bin Syedna 'Abde-'ali Saif-u'd-din, later his successor. Two of his sons and a daughter were simultaneously married. It is said that in this function the Syedna set a standard of simplicity. With the advent of *Pax Britannica*, prosperity with all its attendant advantages had ushered in an era of ostentatious expenditure. At this time, the insistence of the Syedna on simplicity, the Bohra writers state, had a salutary effect on the community.

In the beginning of 1247/July 1831, the Syedna undertook a tour of central Gujarat, Saurashtra and Kacchh. He visited Nawanager and from there went to Mandvi in Kacchh where the situation appeared tense. The Bohras were prepared to take him in a procession through the town though it was felt that serious trouble might follow. The Syedna wisely stayed outside the town, a moderation which was however set at naught, when later some Hindu religious leader arrived and was ostentatiously taken in. In the scuffle, this leader is reported to have been killed.

Returning to Surat on Jamada II, 14, 1249/November 13, 1833, the Syedna nominated his son-in-law, Syedi Muhammad Badr-u'd-din as his successor—a return to the Rajput dynasty. Probably, it was the fructification of the obligation consciously or unconsciously undertaken by the first two Aurangabadi incumbents who held the family of their Rajput predecessors in veneration and had been placed by them in the seat of power.

In the last days of 1252/early in 1837, the Syedna fell sick and he passed away on Z'il-qada 15, 1252/January 23, 1837.

Syedna Badr-u'd-din bin Syedna 'Abde-'ali Saif-u'd-din is the last of the Rajput *da'is*. He was seven when his father died and twenty-six when he succeeded to his office. He was only thirty when he died three years later.

Surat suffered from fire and floods, as his term opened—visitations which left their mark in the memory of the town. On Muharram 19, 1253/April 25, 1837, a disastrous fire commenced and raged for two days, gutting the central portion of the city, including the *da'wat* buildings which housed a valuable library and other material. The Tapti rose to unprecedented heights the next year completing the gruesome tragedy.⁵⁵

The Syedna, like other citizens took a worthy part in the relief activities. Later, he left Surat for Poona, stayed there for about a year and returned on Muharram 28, 1255/April 13, 1839. The same year he married two wives, and also performed the marriage of one of the sons of Syedna Tayyab. And then began the series of events which culminated in his death and left a legacy of uncertainty and dissension.

It appears that the Syedna had been suffering from piles but suddenly, the disease took a turn for the worse. Quite suddenly and unexpectedly, he passed away on Jamad II, 29, 1256/August 28, 1840. So sudden was this death that poisoning was widely suspected; Mulla Muhammadbhai, writing in the term of his successor when the question of his successor's *nas* was raging, writes that it was said that finely grounded diamond powder was a 'participant in the disease' which brought death so suddenly to the Syedna.⁵⁶

The question which came immediately to the forefront and which plagued succeeding generations was: did the Syedna pronounce a clear and unmistakable *nas* in favour of his successor? Syedna 'Abd-u'l Qadir Najm-u'd-din bin Syedna Tayyab Zain-u'd-din was accepted by most of his followers as his legitimate successor. But there remained a strong doubt in the minds of many and a fairly numerous minority—which included the son of the Syedna Syedi 'Abd-u'l Hakim himself—did not believe that the validity of the nomination was above question.⁵⁷

Syedna Muhammad Burhan-u'd-din was the last *da'i* of the Rajput line and it is the exhaustion of this dynasty that helped the Aurangabadi line in establish-

⁵⁵ Idem 130-1: The dates in both the books coincide.

⁵⁶ *Mosam-i-Bahar* III, 717. Mulla Muhammad writes that Syedna Burhan-u'd-din's death was similar to that of the 33rd *da'i*, Syedna Pirkhan Shuja-u'd-din whose death also was strongly suspected to have taken place due to poisoning.

⁵⁷ This was the question discussed at length in law courts especially, in the Burhanpur Dargah Case. For details, see Judgement in the Burhanpur Dargah Case cited above; also for Privy Council Judgement, see, Indian Appeals, *Law Report*, 74-5 (1946-48): 1947, 1-18.

ing itself. Much of the trouble of succession especially among the less learned appears to have been due to the traditional loyalty of the people to this line and their feeling that the newcomers did not have *quite* the same charisma.

Not only his son but his sons-in-law belonged to the faction which questioned Syedna 'Abd-u'l-Qadir Najm-u'd-din's right to his office. His accession was actually the work of four Shaikhs which certified his right;⁵⁸ though their influence was considerable and swayed the majority to keep their doubts, at least to themselves, and placed the Syedna in power, yet, the situation appears to have been such as to make the trial judge in the Burhanpur Case remark "that it was taken almost as an accepted fact among the prominent learned men of the time that Najmuddin Saheb had no *nas* and he was a *Da'i* for administrative purposes only".⁵⁹

While this dangerous knowledge could not be passed on to the laity which regretted the passing away of a celebrated line, it placed the conscientious *masha'ikh* for whom the *da'i's* position was a religious as well as a social necessity, in a dilemma of the soul. A search for alternatives was the result. A committee known as the *Hilf-u'l-Faza'il*, or a Committee of the Learned, came into being in 1293/1876 with the avowed purpose of functioning as a Grand Council which would supplant the office of the *da'i*. This experiment proved unsuccessful; it went up, as Mulla Muhammad writes, like gun-powder.⁶⁰

The 'so-called' *Imami* letters had also in the meanwhile with their mysterious content and threatening tone, indicated the presence of a dissident, possibly a violent faction. These were received as early as 1264/1847 and according to a report in the Burhanpur Case, confused and frightened Syedna 'Abd-u'l-Qadir.⁶¹ In 1293/1876, five prominent Shaikhs left for Arabia on a search for the *Imam*; in this effort, they toured the whole of Arabia though Turkish authorities suspected them of being spies and they were released only with difficulty.

Finally, the doubt and uncertainty in the minds of the 'priestly class', as the judge put it, resulted in the enunciation of the doctrine of *Inqita'-i-nas*, according to which there could be an end of the link with the Imam and the termination of the line of *da'is* which had the divine sanction behind them. The status of subsequent ones was that of *nazim* or managers only, without any suggestion of spiritual preeminence.⁶²

During his long term of nearly forty-five years Syedna 'Abd-u'l-Qadir Najm-u'd-din managed to survive all the onslaughts on his position—but at a

⁵⁸ Judgement, op. cit. 30. *Da'wat-u'l-Akharmin*, 353.

⁵⁹ Judgement, op. cit. 33.

⁶⁰ *Mosam-i-Bahar* III, 749.

⁶¹ Judgement, op. cit. 28-30. *Mosam-i-Bahar* III, 749. *Da'wat-u'l-Akharmin*, 357.

⁶² Judgement, op. cit. 40-2. Abdul Husain, op. cit. 40-2. The present Syedna has refuted this doctrine in his book *Zu'-i-Nur-u'l-haq-u'l Mubin* (99-103) cited above.

price. The jealously preserved status of Shaikh, which had formerly been bestowed on those who had been qualified by learning and piety, was depressed by admitting unworthy incumbents so that the "title of the Shaikh lost its original value among the learned".⁶³ Even the foundations of knowledge were undermined it appears as it began to be felt that the attitude of the Shaikhs was uncertain; the academy in Surat which had been a vantage position of scholars suspicious of the Syedna's claims⁶⁴ by virtue of their theological training, was pruned by its funds being reduced.⁶⁵

Even then, his position suffered. Areas were farmed out to the family members where they collected the dues and retained them thus seriously affecting the central finances. Ostentatious spending in the numerous marriages, together with other expenses, coupled with dwindling income forced the Syedna into the hands of money-lenders. These debts accumulated to an extent which the Syedna was not able to meet in his life-time, nor could his successor get rid of them. At one time later, one of his son's followers, a Shaikh, obtained a decree against him and faced him with the threat of imprisonment by securing a warrant for arrest!⁶⁶

In brief, the position of the *da'i*, a crucial one in the Bohra social system, declined seriously in the age of the 47th *da'i*, Syedna 'Abd-u'l-Qadir Najm-u'd-din. Nowhere is this dismal picture more graphically portrayed than in the brief passages in which Mulla Muhammad 'Ali bewails these troubled days in which he lived, when as he writes, disaffection was rife in many a quarters and even those who should have known better were speaking against the head, thus adding to the confusion.⁶⁷

Among the pleasanter aspects of Syedna's 'Abd-u'l-Qadir's activity were his efforts to organize and improve the Bohras of Karachi. He was the first head of the Bohra community to be invested with the title of a first class *Sardar* of the Bombay Presidency. The honour had been offered to the 44th and 45th *da'i* earlier but had been declined by them.

After a long tenure of nearly forty-five years, Syedna 'Abd-u'l-Qadir passed away on Rajab 26, 1302/May 11, 1885. With him a stormy and eventful age commenced; the stabilization came only with the present *da'i*, Syedna Tahir Saif-u'd-din.

Financial difficulties which had commenced in his predecessor's term continued during the time of Syedna 'Abd-u'l Husain Husam-u'd-din bin Syedna Tayyab Zain-u'd-din. The *dai's* weakened position was also responsible for it; it appears that different areas had been divided between the sons of Syedna

⁶³ Abdul Husain, op. cit. 51.

⁶⁴ Judgement, op. cit. 32-3.

⁶⁵ *Mosam-i-Bahar* III, 738-9. *Da'wat-u'l-Akamin*, 362-3. Judgement, op. cit. 32-3

⁶⁶ *Infra* 50. Judgement, op. cit. 34.

⁶⁷ *Mosam-i-Bahar* III, 519-20 and 738-9, With him, this valuable history comes to an end

'Abd-u'l Qadir with the right of collection, a right which had been given to them in their father's time and which they were not willing to surrender.

In fact, the degree of independence enjoyed by them appears surprising. Syedi Burhan-u'd-din, later to succeed his uncle, was the *Amil* at Bombay, by now one of the most fruitful areas of the *da'wat*. In 1303/1886, Syedna 'Abd-u'l Husain visited Bombay and appealed to his nephew for help in relieving the *da'i* and the *da'wat* of pressing debts. Syedi Burhan-u'd-din failed to respond, and much disheartened, the Syedna proceeded to Poona.⁶⁸

Syedna 'Abd-u'l Husain preferred Ahmedabad to Surat and spent much of his time there. He toured Saurashtra twice and also visited Malwa and Khandesh. He is one of the few *da'is* who spent some time in Baroda, the seat of the dissident Sulaimani and 'Alia sects when he stayed there for a few days in 1308/1891.

Two notable things were done by him. In the first place, he persuaded the residents of different places to build guest houses to accommodate visitors—and incidentally to serve as a nucleus of communal activities. In many pilgrimage centres also rest houses were built at his instance thus facilitating visitors. Secondly, he campaigned against common superstitions of ghosts, vampires and the like which were widely believed by his followers.

Syedna 'Abd-u'l Husain's tenure was not long. He died in Ahmedabad on Zi'l-hujja 27, 1308/August 3, 1891. He was succeeded by his nephew Syedi Burhan-u'd-din of Bombay though his former disappointment must have rankled in the Syedna's mind.

Syedna Muhammad Burhan-u'd-din made a start by attempting to conciliate the people who had been doubtful of his father's *nas*. He invited Syedi 'Abd-u'l-lah Hakim-u'd-din, his younger brother to join him though, as has been noted above, he had been among the dissidents. Syedi 'Abd-u'l-lah at first declined but later he allowed himself to be persuaded and joined the Syedna.⁶⁹ During the Burhanpur Case, "the plaintiff filed photo copies of a declaration alleged to have been made by the Syedna to his brother that he was not a *Da'i-u'l-muthuq* in the religious sense but only a *Da'i* for carrying out the administration of the Dawat".⁷⁰

Financial difficulties which had troubled his uncle continued during Syedna Muhammad's time. One of his creditors, a Shaikh, as has been mentioned before threatened arrest. In this predicament, the Syedna is said to have declared that the property which apparently seemed to be his, was in reality that of the *da'wat*—a statement which was quoted later in the Chandbhai Ghalla Case.

It was probably to redress the affairs of the *da'wat* and control the excessive

⁶⁸ *Da'wat-u'l-Akarmin*, 368.

⁶⁹ Judgement, op. cit. 30. *Da'wat-u'l-Akarmin*, 371.

⁷⁰ Judgement, op. cit. 34-7.

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independence of local functionaries that the Syedna formulated a *Dastur-u'l-amal* which was promulgated at a conference held at the instance of the noted Dau'di industrialist Sir Adamji Pirbhai at his native place Dhoraji, on Shawwal 26, 1216/March 9, 1899. In this *dastur-u'l-amal* numerous obsolete customs were sought to be removed and the procedures of marriage and the rituals rationalized. It was also laid down that it was necessary for the *Amil* to remit his collections to the centre and if his area was visited by the Syedna, half the expenses were to be defrayed by the *jama't*. *Amils* were also authorized to accord permission to their subordinate Mullahs to carry out marriages and other ceremonies.

Syedna Muhammad Burhan-u'd-din was the first Indian *da'i* after Syedna Yusuf bin Sulaiman to leave the shores of India when he proceeded on *haj*. During this period, he left Syedi Isma'ilji Badr-u'd-din his uncle in charge of the *da'wat* and probably intended to nominate him as his successor.

On his return, however, when he fell sick, he decided in favour of his cousin, Syedi 'Abde-'ali Mohi-u'd-din bin Syedna Husam-u'd-din; but he declined and suggested that his younger brother 'Abd-u'l-lah Badr-u'd-din was better able to bear the burden. On this, the Syedna nominated him as his successor before passing away on Zil-hujja 27, 1323/February 22, 1906.

During the period of Syedna Muhammad Burhan-u'd-din, another Bohra sect came into existence—the Mahdibagh sect—which has its headquarters and almost total settlement in Nagpur. The founder of this sect was an extraordinarily bright young man named 'Abd-u'l Husain bin Jiwa'ji. 'Abd-u'l-Husain belonged to Kapadwanj but had been a shopkeeper in Bombay till he went to Nagpur. Here in 1897, he claimed that he was in direct communication with the *Imam* and had been appointed his *Hujjat* or proof, namely a higher status than that of the *da'i-u'l-mutluq*.

The intellectual attainments of Maulana 'Abd-u'l Husain or Malik Saheb as he was popularly known together with the circumstances of the *da'wat*, led to a number of learned men, *masha'ikhs*, joining him and the formation of the group which came to be known by its residential locale in Nagpur. The efforts of Shaikh Ahmad 'Ali Hamid-u'd-din, the *Amil* at Nagpur, led to the return of a few people. Nearly a hundred families mainly resident in Mahdibagh and largely marrying within themselves however, formed the nucleus of the new sect.⁷¹

The Mahdibagh group have an era for themselves which begins on the first of Ramzan and commences in the year the light is said to have first dawned on Maulana Malik Sahib, the period of *zuhur*. Called the 'Abidi era, the present year is its seventy-fifth. The founder, held the reins of the sect from the first year 1308/1890 to 1321/1903, though he made the public declaration in 1897. He was succeeded by Khan Bahadur Maulana H. M. Malik in 1903

⁷¹ Judgement, op. cit. 37-8. Abdul Husain, op. cit. 49-50. *Da'wat-u'l-Akamin*, 378.

and was the head till 1922. From 1922 to 1956, Maulana Ibrahim Raza Saheb was the head and in that year he was succeeded by Maulana Hasan Nurani Sahib who is the present head.

The Mahdibagh sect as will be noted, is a small and a compact one and its people have the customs and manners of other Bohras except that they do not inter-marry and generally do not have much contact with them. Its headship is not hereditary; its founder disclaimed that his mission was to form a line and picked his successor, it is said, almost by instant recognition when a chance visit took him to a shop where he was a *gumashta*, or clerk-attendant.⁷²

Syedna 'Abd-u'l-lah's term was a short one of seven years. With him commenced an effort to reform the run-down condition of the *da'wat* administration. The independence of the *Amils* was curtailed and an attempt was made to redress the abuses with which local administration of the *jama't* was rife. Even more significant, was the end of flagrant distribution of titles and offices which had been characteristic of the *da'wat* in the past. Syedna Badr-u'd-din is said to have disregarded every qualification but knowledge and learning in the appointments he made to high office, especially to those around himself.

Simultaneously an attempt was made to improve the quality of these incumbents by improving the condition of the madrasa at Surat. He also undertook wide tours among his far-flung followers and toured widely in Western and Central India.

Syedna Badr-u'd-din was honoured by the British Government by the grant of a first class *Sardar* in the Presidency of Bombay. About the same time, trouble between the Bohras and other Muslims flared up which led to widespread rioting and destruction of Bohra shops culminating in the flight of many Bohras from Bhopal. The decision of this dispute took place not in Syedna's time but in that of his successor and Syedna Tahir Saif-u'd-din's attitude appears to have made him unpopular among the Bohras of Bhopal.⁷³

Originally it appears that the Syedna wished to nominate his elder nephew, Syedi Tayyab Zain-u'd-din but he is said to have conveyed to his uncle that his nature resembled that of Syedi 'Abde-'ali Mohi-u'd-din who had declined the office in his favour. Upon this, the Syedna nominated his second nephew, Syedi Tahir Saif-u'd-din to this office. The abstention was almost prophetic; soon after Syedi Tayyab passed away. This shock followed by the Bhopal trouble intensified the heart trouble with which the Syedna was suffering and he passed away on Rabi II, 10, 1333 January 26, 1915.

With the death of the 50th *da'i*, this account of the history of the Da'udi

⁷² From personal interview with a member of this sect.

⁷³ Najm-u'd-din Ghani, *Mazahib-i-Islam*, 317-21.

Bohras may be brought to an end for the eventful half-century which has been passed under the aegis of his successor, the present *da'i*, 51st in the order, Syedna Tahir Saif-u'd-din, requires an independent chapter. Traditional challenges to his authority remain and are expressed in law suits; but equally significant is the movement which while preferring to remain within the fold, seeks to democratize the administrative structure. Simultaneously, there is an attempt to regulate and modernize the affairs of the *da'wat* and adapt it to a fast-changing situation within the limits imposed by a theory which is said to give the *da'i* powers which are not amenable or answerable to human agencies.

Bohra history has yet to be written and it can be written satisfactorily only when the required libraries are catalogued and open. Even then it may prove to be a task which may leave a historian unsatisfied. The material is mainly one-sided and thereby leaves the problem stated but not answered; except the Sulaimanis, none of the dissident sects appear to have any sizable literature and much disappeared completely. Nevertheless, a clear exposition of this material would not only add a new dimension to regional or communal history but would add to our knowledge of the history of India as a whole.